

THE NEWS MAGAZINE OF THE ALAMO PC ORGANIZATION

PC Alamode

TIPS FOR THE NEW YEAR ISSUE

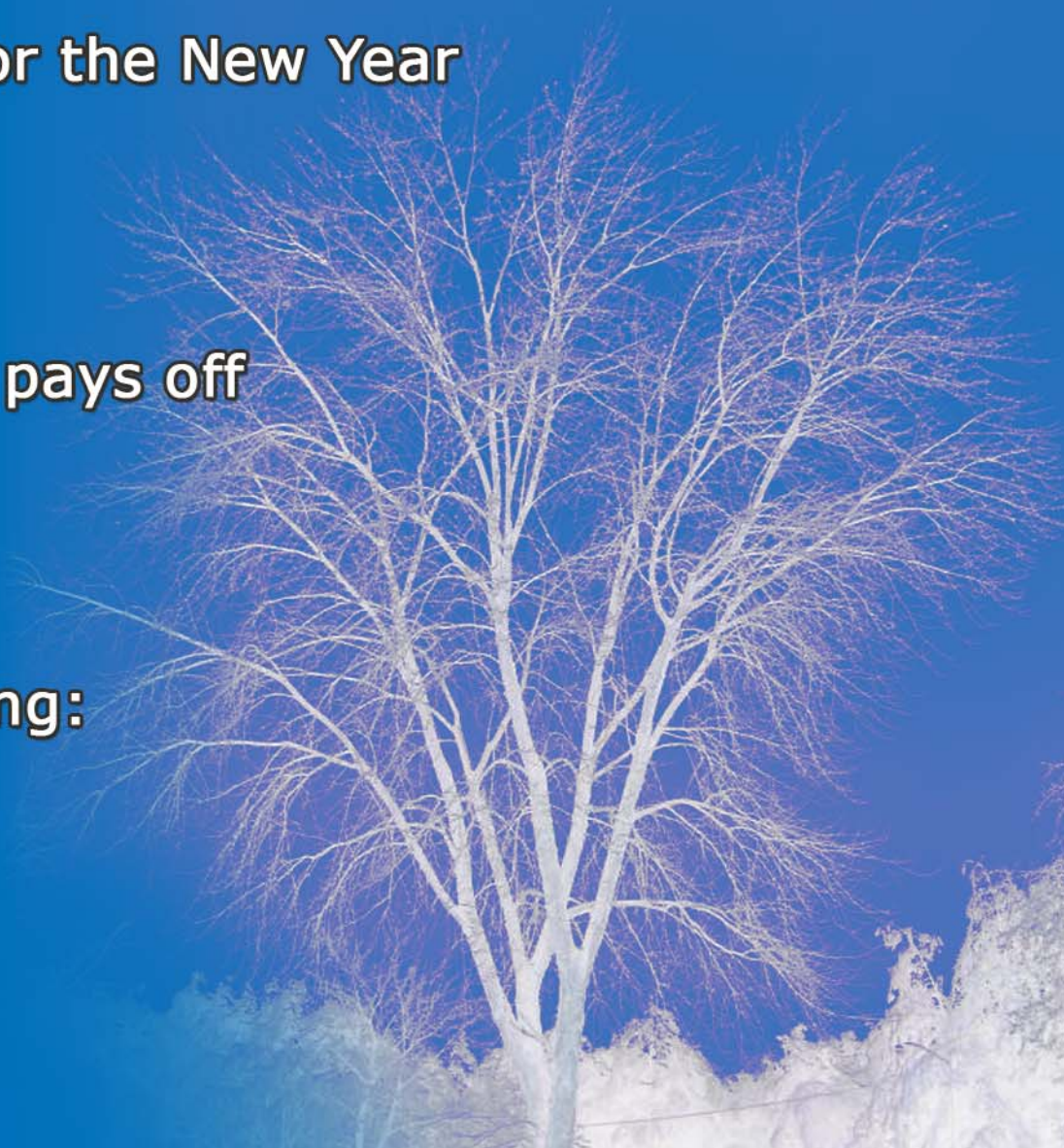
www.alamopc.org
January 2006
\$4.00

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in the Valley**
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TBA**
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Alamo PC Organization

Alamo PC Organization is a non-profit organization whose mission is to increase its members knowledge and effective use of personal computers through presentations, instructional programs, other membership services and access to the expertise of other members.



To register for a Class, Study Group or Sr. Comp classes call:

Registration number **210.736.0080**

If you **didn't receive your issue** of *PC Alamode* or have questions about your **membership** e-mail:

membership@alamopc.org

If you have questions about Alamo PC call:

Learning Center number **210.736.0700**

If you have comments about classes call

Linda Bianchi **210.226.2460**

If you have questions about advertising call

Joseph de Leon
send e-mail to editor@alamopc.org

Please send change of address and other correspondence to:

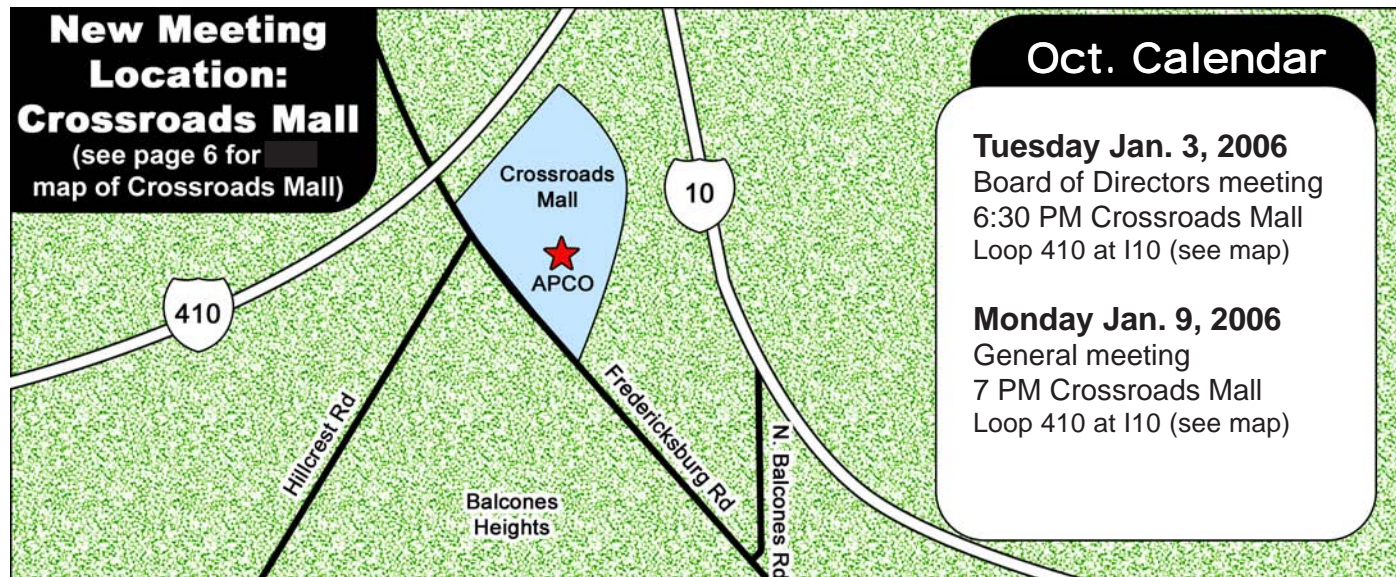
Alamo PC Organization
PO Box 65180
San Antonio, TX 78265-5180

Meetings

Monthly program meetings are normally held the second Monday of the month. Meetings are held at the Crossroads Convention Center (across from the Learning Center) located in the lower level of Crossroads Mall, Loop 410 at the intersection with I-10 starting at 7:00PM. Open to all members and the public.

The Board of Directors meets normally on the Tuesday prior to the monthly General Meeting. The BoD meets at the Alamo PC Learning Center located in the lower level of Crossroads Mall, Loop 410 at the intersection with I-10 starting at 6:30PM. Any changes will be announced via the Voice Mail/Hot Line (736-0700) and on the Calendar of Events. Open to all members.

New Meeting Location:
Crossroads Mall
(see page 6 for map of Crossroads Mall)



Oct. Calendar

Tuesday Jan. 3, 2006
Board of Directors meeting
6:30 PM Crossroads Mall
Loop 410 at I10 (see map)

Monday Jan. 9, 2006
General meeting
7 PM Crossroads Mall
Loop 410 at I10 (see map)

Tips and tools for computing in the New Year



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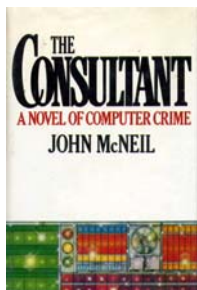
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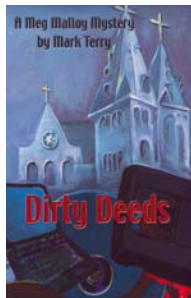


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PC Alamode

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PUBLICATION SUBMISSIONS: Please check with the editor regarding submitting ads. **Deadline for submissions is the first of the month preceding publication.** e-mail to:

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Half pg. (3 ¹ / ₂ " w x 9 ¹ / ₂ " h)	144	138	130	121
Quarter pg. (3 ¹ / ₂ " w x 4 ¹ / ₂ " h)	74	72	64	62
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**To be paid in advance

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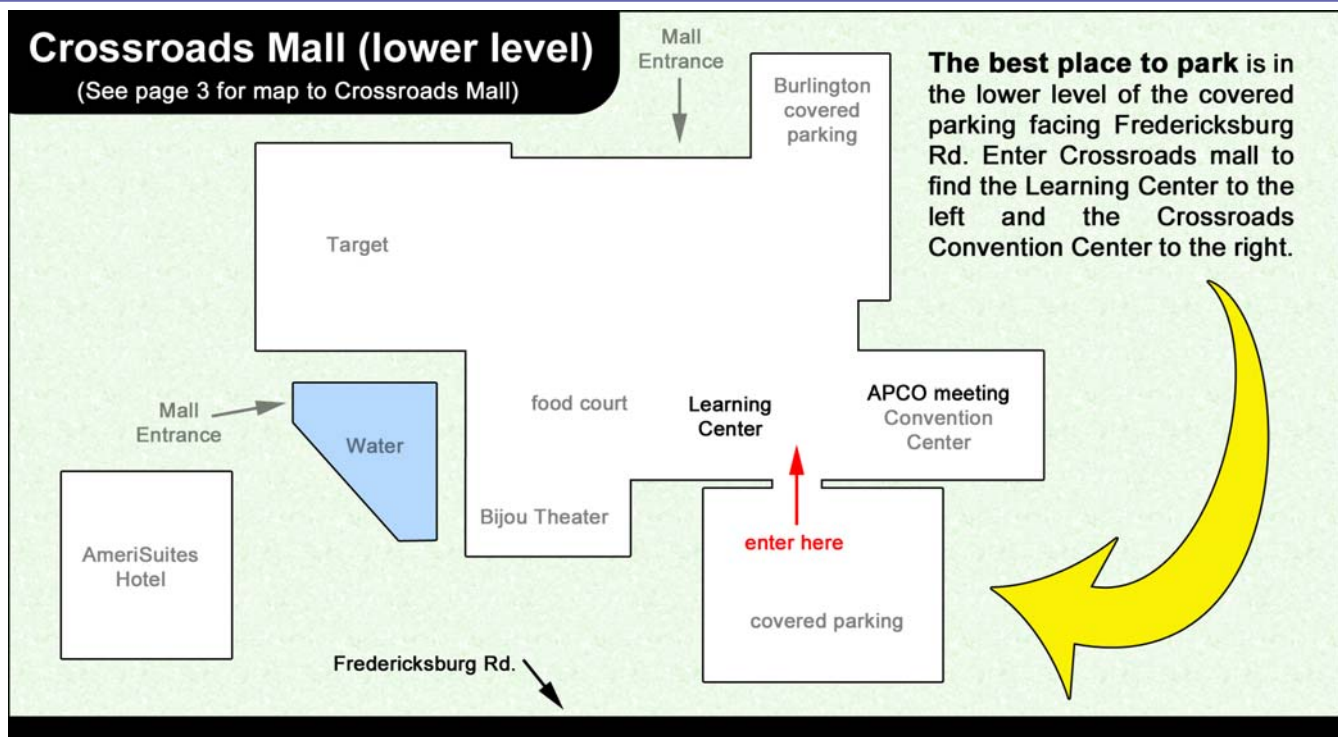
Learning Center, Crossroads Mall

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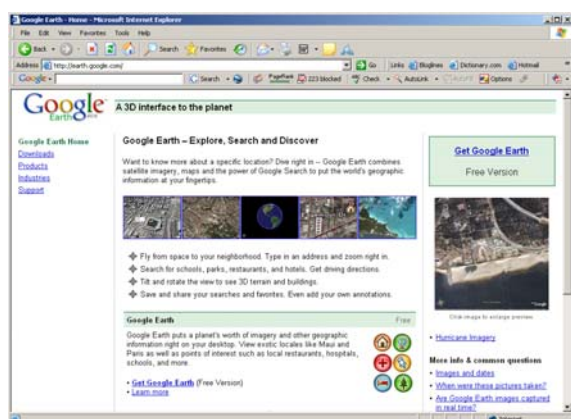
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For Study Groups and Classes or for SeniorComp classes, phone: 736-0080



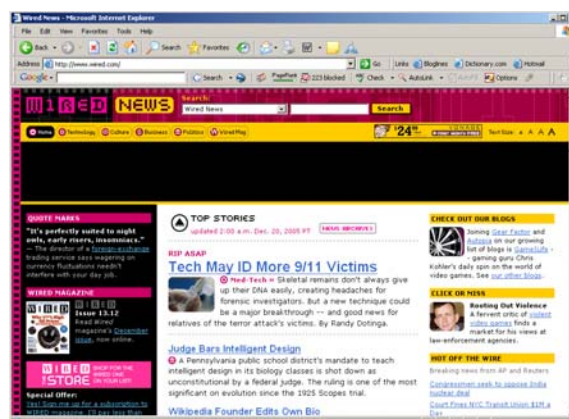
PC Alamode Links List



Google Earth

<<http://www.earth.google.com>>

Want to know more about a specific location? Dive right in -- Google Earth combines satellite imagery, maps and the power of Google Search to put the world's geographic information at your fingertips.



Wired News

<<http://www.wired.com>>

News site and magazine, covering technology, culture, business and politics.



The start of the New Year brings many congratulations to our members honored at the Volunteer Recognition celebration. Linda and Mike Bianchi did a wonderful job of documenting the event. Please have a look on page 34.

One of the most exciting new things you can expect from the Learning Center this year are practice sessions. Students now have a specific time period for students taking Alamo PC Courses to use Computer Lab (Classroom One) to practice their class assignments. For more information, call the Learning Center at 733-0700.

Another ongoing event is the AARP training sessions for people interested in volunteering to help prepare electronic tax returns. Read about Henry Johnson's success in the Rio Grand Valley on page 52.

It's an important time to remember to renew your membership. You may even consider renewing early!

Joseph de Leon, Editor

<editor@alamopc.org>



Joseph de Leon, Alamo PC

Joseph has worked in the graphics industry for 7 years and teaches graphics and web classes at San Antonio College. 3

President's Message

Bill Klutz

New Year, New Beginning!

The year of 2005 is now behind us, and many are glad. Thanksgiving is a blur, the "Holiday Blitz" has ceased all but staccato advertisements and holiday oriented merchandise is all but gone, shelves have been restocked with more practical "goodies" for everyone, the crowded isles are almost empty, etc. and physical recovery is underway. The "New Year sales are also underway (designed to rid the shelves of any hint of what is gone and recoup something on the merchandise that "didn't get the big bucks.!" And, we don't have to think about "Only shopping days until...!" At least not for many months.

The resolutions (about how things will be different) have been made, and we are almost free to go about our daily lives. I said "almost free" because for most, it is back to work and back to school. Don't worry, because before we know it, the middle of November will again be upon us and we can start the whole "Close Out The Year" process again and wonder "Where did the year go?"

I hope that during the "Giving and Resolving Season" each member has resolved to learn more about technology (computers in particular) in 2006, made a commitment to continue your relationship with the organization and to sharing little of your time and talent with others. In the days just past, you probably heard the statement, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Try it with a little time and talent. I am sure it will be proven true.

In recent months I have addressed work and changes that have been done Revised Bylaws, Revised number of Board positions and areas of responsibility, Current Board composition and tenure, etc. I also indicated that of the seven board positions authorized, there were only five filled. I am happy to report that one additional position is in the process of being filled by someone who volunteered to serve. That has relieves some of the additional responsibilities from those willing to serve, but still leaves vacancies. Once again, I am asking for others to help share the responsibilities.

Planning Meeting

The Alamo PC Board of Directors (BOD) and Officers have agreed to hold a planning meeting during January (tentatively the 14th). Final plans will be made at the January BOD meeting (Jan 3rd). Information will be posted to the web site so that anyone who wishes to be present will know when and where.

Consumer Electronics Show (CES)

The first CES took place in New York City in June of 1967 with 200 exhibitors and 17,500 attendees. Since then, CES has grown more than seven-fold. Nearly 2,500 exhibitors, filling 1.5 million net square feet of exhibit space, showcased their latest products and services to more than 130,000 attendees at the 2005 International CES.

The 2006 International CES will take place January 5th-8th in Las Vegas, NV. More than 100 sessions with the industry's leading speakers will help attendees discover the newest trends, strategies and profit opportunities in the consumer technology industry. This is the time for everyone to "roll out" their new products, tell about what they are currently working and the projected date of completion, and generally give a forecast for the consumer market and their company in particular. The "computer" oriented sector is only a part of this show, now that the computer show COMDEX ceased operation. However, from the "Keynote Speakers" listed you might think otherwise. The pre-show address (Wed/6:30 P.M.), will feature Bill Gates (Chairman and Chief Software

Architect, Microsoft Corporation). Bill Gates returns to kick off CES with his vision of the year ahead in consumer electronics. If the past is anything like the future, everyone should expect the unexpected. Gates has used the International CES to showcase new products like the Xbox, Tablet PC and Smartphone.

Some of the other speakers scheduled are: Thur/9 A.M. Sir Howard Stringer, Chairman & CEO, Sony Corp; Thur/2:30 P.M., Michael Dell (Dell's chairman of the board); Thur/4:30 P.M., Paul Otellini (CEO, Intel Corp.); Fri/9 A.M., Terry Semel (Chairman & CEO, Yahoo! Inc.); and Fri/4 P.M., Larry Page (Co-founder and President of Products, Google). We will try to secure copies of the address and post them to our website for those who might be interested in what is said.

There should also be a good number of new computer hardware and software products, plus other areas of interest -- phones, projection systems, entertainment centers, etc. Hopefully there will be some software "samples" available for user groups to review and make a report to member.

Improve your computer skills

Consider taking a free class or two early in 2006. (You may also be interested in one of the fee based classes.) There are many classes to choose from. If you have one in mind that is not listed, let someone know so we can try to meet your needs (736-0700 or <education@alamopc.org>).

Start your year off right!

Make sure that your member info is current, especially your E-Mail address (update both on the web-site, via "members" password protected section). That will allow us to send out a renewal reminder about two months early, without cost to the organization. Please keep track of when your membership expires, and renew well in advance, to save the organization a notification expense and someone's time preparing the correspondence. Attend some of the monthly general meetings where presenters provide information about current and future computer related issues. (You also have the opportunity to go home with free product that is distributed by the presenter and/or receive limited time discounts. Last month I was fortunate enough to receive a copy of CorelDRAW Graphics Suite 12.)

Membership renewals remain a concern we are still not retaining members at the level that we would desire. If you do not choose to renew, we would appreciate knowing "Why?" (Send an E-Mail to membership@alamopc.org), or to me through the organization account <president@alamopc.org> or privately <wlklutzjr@juno.com>. Also, if you have anything (comment, question, statement, concern), please make someone aware of it. I welcome all communications, especially those on how we can improve the Alamo PC Organization and increase member interest!

I hope everyone had a very nice Thanksgiving. Hope everyone has a very Happy Holidays with family and friends.

January Program

David Steward

No presenter has been confirmed.

News Brief

Voice Over IP goes mainstream

Vonage, the No. 1 Internet phone company, is offering its subscribers a wireless Wi-Fi phone that can make calls over the Internet at homes or at public Wi-Fi hot spots. New phone will let consumers make VoIP calls from any Wi-Fi hot spot. Wi-Fi calls are essentially free, in contrast to cell phone calls, and customers will plug a regular phone into an adapter linked to a broadband Internet line. Vonage will then turn the calls into data that travel by Internet before being converted back to voice at the other end. Meanwhile, Comcast Corp., the nation's biggest cable company, said Monday it plans to roll out phone service over the Internet to all 21.5 million of its customers within the next year, bringing the online technology into the mainstream.

News Brief

Tiny chips report to doctors

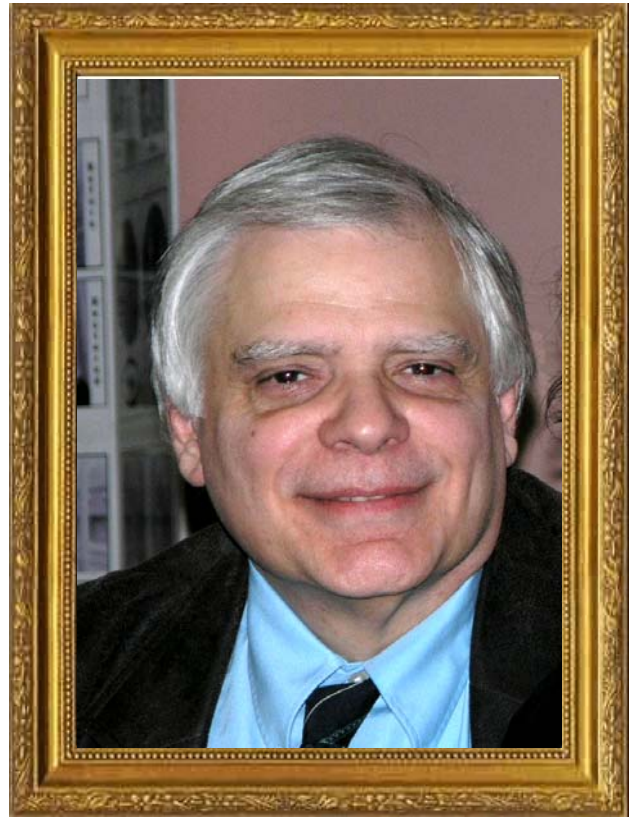
Install a chip inside your body, and when something goes wrong, it automatically pings your doctor. Or even simpler, your complete medical makeup and history can be burned into a chip and implanted in your body. The tiny chips, which are embedded under the skin with a syringe, are programmed with a code similar to the UPC codes on retail goods, which releases patient-specific information on such issues as allergies and prior treatments when scanned.

Philips' Motiva technology allows patients to use their home televisions to communicate with their care providers over a broadband connection. The pilot program has enrolled 60 patients. The test is designed to gauge how well patients and health care providers use the interactive system when communicating and sharing medical information.



Volunteer of the Month

Joe Fazzino



News Brief

Are robots taking over?

Helen Greiner, co-founder of iRobot, said her company had sold 1 million of its Roomba robotic vacuum cleaners--a milestone that drew applause at the RoboNexus International Conference & Exposition. The use of robots to perform household tasks such as lawn-mowing, vacuuming, guard duty and other chores is slated to increase sevenfold by 2007, according to the U.N.'s latest World Robotics Survey.

ComputerFest is a collection of local and statewide dealers under one roof offering rock-bottom prices on all your computer needs. All of our dealers are independent wholesalers, so each conducts business separately. Most of the dealers will accept credit cards, but with cash you can usually get the best deals. And new products are almost always backed up with a warrantee, so you and your wallet can always feel comfortable with your purchases.

What you can find at the show:

New Complete Systems
New Hardware
Newest Software Titles
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Ink-Jet Recharge Kits
Imaging Devices
Internet Services
Used Hardware
Multimedia Upgrades
Shareware
Diagnostic Equipment
Cables & Connectors
Bare Bone Systems
Computer Related Books
Refurbished Systems, Monitors

Location:

Live Oak Convention Center
8101 Pat Booker Road
San Antonio, TX.

Show Dates and Times:

more info at <http://www.pcshows.com/>



Geeky Gourmet

The Geeky Gourmet was unable to meet the deadline this month, so December's menu is being repeated. The rich Mexican eggnog keeps under refrigeration for a long time, well into the new year. It can be sipped from small glasses or served over the pumpkin cake or over some berries.

Rompop De Almendras (Almond Eggnog)

- 6 whole cloves
- 1 4-inch stick cinnamon
- 2 cups rum, or to taste
- 6 cups milk
- 2-1/2 cups sugar
- 1/2 cup finely ground blanched almonds
- 15 egg yolks
- 1/4 teaspoon grated nutmeg

Marinate the cloves and cinnamon stick in the rum for 24 hours. Boil the milk and sugar in a large saucepan. Add the almonds and cook over low heat for 5 minutes. Set aside.

Beat the egg yolks for 5-10 minutes until they form a ribbon. Mix 1 cup of the boiled milk into the egg yolks. Add this mixture to the rest of the milk and cook over low heat, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon, for 10 minutes or until thickened.

Remove the cloves and cinnamon and stir the rum into the eggnog. Sprinkle each serving with nutmeg. Serve at room temperature or chilled.

Pumpkin Pound Cake

- 2 cups sugar
- 4 eggs
- 1-1/2 cups oil
- 2 cups flour
- 1-teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons soda
- 3 teaspoons cinnamon
- 1-1/2 cups canned pumpkin

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Blend together sugar, eggs and oil thoroughly. Sift together dry ingredients and add alternately to first mixture with pumpkin, mixing well after each addition. Bake in greased and floured 1-inch tube pan for 1 hour. Cool 20 – 25 minutes in pan. Frost when cool, with favorite icing or serve with the rompop.



Texas Trash

- 3/4 cup bacon grease or margarine
- 1-1/2 sticks margarine
- 3 Tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- 3 Tablespoons garlic salt
- 1-1/2 teaspoons Accent
- 2 Tablespoons Tabasco
- 1 large can mixed nuts
- 1/2 box Cheerios
- 2 boxes small pretzels
- 1/2 box Wheat Chex
- 1/2 box Rice Chex
- Oyster crackers (optional)

Mix first 6 ingredients together in a saucepan and pour over the next 6 ingredients. Bake 1-1/2 hours at 225 degrees. Stir every 15 minutes. Place in covered containers and serve for snacks.

Texas Best Bean Dip (a far cry from the plastic taste of the canned variety)

- 4 cups pinto beans
- 2 cups chopped onion
- 3 cloves garlic, chopped
- 2 tablespoons ground cumin seeds
- 2 tablespoons bacon drippings
- 6 tablespoons chili powder
- Salt to taste
- 1/2 cup butter
- 1/2 pound sharp Cheddar cheese, grated
- dash of hot sauce.

Soak beans overnight. Cook in soaking water with onions, garlic, cumin, chili powder and bacon drippings. Simmer 3 – 4 hours. When beans are soft, add salt. While beans are warm, add butter, cheese and hot sauce. Blend in blender until smooth. Serve warm with tortilla chips.



From the Deals Guy

Bob (The Cheapskate) Click, Greater Orlando Computer Users Group

This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers or freebies I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of any products, no matter how enthused I might sound. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click <Bobclick@mindspring.com>. Visit my Web site at <<http://www.dealsguy.com>> for past columns and some interesting articles.

I can't emphasize enough the value of users group help and here is an example: Recently, while preparing to drive over to our beach condo for a couple of days, I wanted to copy a floppy disk containing some important files not backed up. When I attempted to copy it, the process stopped in the middle telling me my second disk was corrupted. I tried to stop the process so I could use another disk, but couldn't get the procedure to go away. Even when I killed Windows Explorer, then restarted it, and was ready with a new disk, it tried unsuccessfully to resume the process. Finally, I decided to reboot the computer in an effort to clear it, and when it tried to restart, all I got was the opening Intel screen and nothing more. After forcing the machine to shut down, and a brief pause, I tried to start the computer again and it would not go past the startup Intel screen.

Horror set in and I wondered what I might have done to screw it up, and what to do next. I was lost! All of a sudden I remembered something I had read only a couple days before in a users group newsletter while browsing a write-up about their Q & A session. A member reported that they could not get their computer to boot and finally removed a USB Flash Drive they had been using before they shut it off. It booted up just fine with the flash drive removed. Since I was using a USB Flash Drive while trying a new backup program, I removed it, tried to boot again, and was very relieved when the computer booted normally. I am running Windows XP Professional.

I can't remember which newsletter I read that in, but my thanks to the user group community and the newsletters I receive from them. I read them from cover to cover, especially about their Q & A sessions and sometimes find good information that I think my readers might use. It was interesting that when I tried rebooting again with a 256 Meg USB Flash Drive plugged in; it booted just fine, but would not boot with the one gig USB drive plugged in. I would never have thought to remove that flash drive so I hope my experience was useful to my readers.

*Problems in Dell Land

I read in Ed Foster's Gripe Line about a company that had bought almost 200 Dell Optiplex GX270 PCs, and when a known defect arose concerning a capacitor on the motherboard that tended to swell and cause problems, it should have been covered by their support contract, but Dell didn't live up to their agreement. They started to replace them, but after more problem boards were found, they stopped and instead eventually wanted the company to trade them in. For financial reasons the customer didn't want to do that and any negotiations finally stopped. It was known that some larger companies with the same problem had gotten it resolved, but nobody knows why. Up until now, I had thought Dell had a good name in the industry and I don't know the outcome. Ed Foster's Gripe Line URL is <<http://www.gripe2ed.com>>, but I couldn't find this story posted at this writing, maybe because I read it in an August issue. You need to set up a password to access the Gripe Line Web site. For other information about the problem, check <<http://www.dslreports.com/forum/remark,13709831>>.

For the folks who ask me about the trade shows, we recently worked the National Safety Council Show <<http://www.safety2005.org>> that was very interesting. It used about 500,000 square feet of exhibit space and had over 20,000 attendees from around the globe. You wouldn't think so, but I saw some cutting-edge technology featured there. Like many trade

shows here, they had an evening party for attendees at Universal Studios.

We also worked the interesting Bank Administration Industry show. <<http://www.bai.org>> You would have easily recognized many names exhibiting there, which included well known ATM machines, security names and software companies like Microsoft, Adobe, Oracle USA and many others well known to users group people. The exhibit area was about 400,000 sq. ft. of area. Free food for the attendees too. Attendance was about 12,000. Central Florida is a hotbed of trade show activity, but we only work a few of them.

*Still Good

Don't forget the deal is still good for the WebBuild Express software for creating your Web site. To download it at <<http://store.esellerate.net/nfti/store>>, use the coupon code CPN8348901136, when it calls for it, to receive your 25% discount. I have a trial version but I have not tried it out yet. Between health problems and laziness, I don't have much for you this month, but I hope you took advantage of the APCUG announcements for deals.

*The Lost Can Often Be Found

Have you ever deleted a file and later found you should not have done that? No problem, just go to the Recycle Bin and get it back. Come to find out though, it has been dumped by the Recycle Bin. Now you have another problem; but not if you have PC Inspector, which can do unbelievable things when it comes to recovering deleted files from your hard drive. Your hard drive has to be working properly for it to work.

Best of all, PC Inspector is Freeware and it can be downloaded at <http://www.pcinspector.de/file_recovery/uK/welcome.htm>. If you have used Secure Clean or Wipe Drive, forget about it. I found this information in a UG newsletter, but have not tried it personally.

STUDY GROUPS

Call the Learning Center for schedule information 736-0700 or see page 59-63.

Sony BMG - shame on you!

John Brewer, Computer Club of Oklahoma City

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Computer users may have noticed the recent brouhaha about Sony music CDs. Is there a valid issue or simply a lot of heat with no real threat? The issue developed from the desire of Sony-BMG to copy-protect its music CDs. If the music CD is played in a personal computer, and the "accept" button is clicked, then software known as XCP is installed. XCP reportedly uses "rootkit" technology. Wikipedia states that a "rootkit is a set of software tools frequently used by a third party (usually an intruder) after gaining access to a computer system. These tools are intended to conceal running processes, files or system data, which helps an intruder maintain access to a system without the user's knowledge. Rootkits are known to exist for a variety of operating systems such as Linux, Solaris and versions of Microsoft Windows. The rootkit concept is the dominant controversial aspect of the 2005 Sony CD copy protection controversy, which has made the previously obscure concept of a rootkit much more widely known in the technology community, and to the general public."

The technical issues seem to be rather complicated, but a survey of the articles available on the Internet is disturbing. Apparently, rootkits install a backdoor to the computer and are difficult to remove. Apparently, there is a patch available that may or may not remove the Sony software. Personally, this author thinks the only alternative is to avoid Sony CDs or to avoid playing any Sony CDs on a personal computer. The music industry is very serious about copyright violations and may think that the "end justifies the means" in this particular matter.

The following is a portion of a Sony response dated November 18, 2005. "You may be aware of the recent attention given to the XCP content protection software included on some SONY-BMG CDs. This software was provided to us by a third-party vendor, First4Internet. Discussion has centered on security concerns raised about the use of CDs containing this software. We share the concerns of consumers regarding these discs, and we are instituting a mail-in program that will allow consumers to exchange any CD with XCP software for the same CD without copy protection and receive MP3 files of the same title. We also have asked our retail partners to remove all unsold CDs with XCP software from their store shelves and inventory. Please click here for exchange program details.

"Our new initiatives follow the measures we have already taken, including the voluntary suspension of the manufacture of CDs with the XCP software. In addition, to address security concerns, we provided to major software and anti-virus companies a software update, which also may be downloaded at <http://cp.sonybm.com/xcp/english/updates.html>. We will shortly provide a simplified and secure procedure to uninstall the XCP software if it resides on your computer."

Sony sounds like it is trying to respond in a responsible manner. However, this type of response is also an attempt to institute damage control. Sony has been sued by the Electronic Frontier Foundation and the Attorney General for the State of Texas regarding this practice.

EFF filed its complaint in a California state court on November 21, 2005. The EFF Web site states that "by including a flawed and overreaching computer program in over 20 million music CDs sold to the public, Sony-BMG has created serious security, privacy and consumer-protection problems that have damaged music lovers everywhere.

At issue are two software technologies: SunnComm's MediaMax and First4Internet's Extended Copy Protection

(also known as XCP), which Sony-BMG claims to have placed on the music CDs to restrict consumer use of the music on the CDs, but which in truth do much more, including monitoring customer listening of the CDs and installing undisclosed and in some cases hidden files on users' computers that can expose users to malicious attacks by third parties, all without appropriate notice and consent from purchasers. The CDs also condition use of the music on unconscionable licensing terms in the End User Licensing Agreement (EULA).

After a series of embarrassing public revelations about security risks associated with the XCP software, including warnings issued by the United States Government, Microsoft and leading anti-virus companies, Sony-BMG has taken some steps to respond to the security risks created by the XCP technology. Sony-BMG has failed, however, to address security concerns raised by the MediaMax software or the consumer privacy and consumer fairness problems created by both technologies."

The Attorney General of the State of Texas has also filed litigation regarding the same spyware from Sony. The Web site for the AG addresses the litigation. Today [Texas] "sued SONY-BMG Music Entertainment as the first state in the nation to bring legal action against SONY for illegal "spyware." The suit is also the first filed under the state's spyware law of 2005. It alleges the company surreptitiously installed the spyware on millions of compact music discs (CDs) that consumers inserted into their computers when they play the CDs, which can compromise the systems.

The Attorney General's lawsuit alleges the New York-based company violated a new Texas law protecting consumers from the hidden spyware. The company accomplished this by using new technology on certain music CDs to install files onto consumers' computers that hide other files installed by SONY. This secret "cloaking" component is installed without the knowledge of consumers and can cause their computers to become vulnerable to computer viruses and other forms of attack.

"SONY has engaged in a technological version of cloak and dagger deceit against consumers by hiding secret files on their computers," said Attorney General Abbott. "Consumers who purchased a SONY CD thought they were buying music. Instead, they received spyware that can damage a computer, subject it to viruses and expose the consumer to possible identity crime."

SONY insists on its Web site that it has recalled all affected CDs. However, Attorney General's investigators were able to

purchase numerous titles at Austin retail stores as recently as Sunday evening.

According to SONY's Web site, the company recently distributed millions of CDs across the nation on 52 CDs by various artists. These CDs contained embedded files used for copy protection – or XCP technology. The files prompt consumers to enter into a user agreement to install SONY's audio player. By opting into the agreement, which Sony represents is the only way a consumer can listen to these CDs on a computer, the consumer is unaware that SONY secretly installs files into the computer's Microsoft Windows folders. Consumers are unable to detect and remove these files.

SONY-BMG claims on its Web site that this XCP technology merely prevents unlimited copying, is otherwise passive and does not gather personal information about a computer user. However, the Attorney General's investigation into this technology revealed that it remains hidden and active at all times

after installation, even when SONY's media player is inactive, prompting concerns about its true purpose.

The Attorney General's lawsuit also alleges that a phantom file is installed to conceal the XCP files from the user, thus making it difficult for the user to remove the files from his or her computer. Moreover, recent news accounts allege that newly created viruses that exploit this phantom file have been spreading. A user unfamiliar with installation – and removal – of this technology may be vulnerable to new security risks and possibly identity theft.

Because of alleged violations of the Consumer Protection Against Computer Spyware Act of 2005, the Attorney General is seeking civil penalties of \$100,000 for each violation of the law, attorneys' fees and investigative costs."

Sony-BMG – shame on you!



RAM & Reason

Watch out for recalls

Rob Rice, Computer Club of Oklahoma City

Rob Rice is a computer specialist working in Anchorage, Alaska. Rob can be contacted at <articles@isp.com>

From January 2005 through June 2005, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission listed eight recalls of computer-related products. Power adapters and batteries are the most common items recalled. Some of the companies affected by the recalls include: Apple, Hitachi and Belkin. For a complete list, photos and descriptions please see the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission's website at, <http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/prerel/prerel.html>.

Here is another common recall:

Product: Hewlett-Packard (HP) L2035 Flat Panel Monitor

Units: About 15,000

Manufacturer: Philips PC Peripherals, Colorado Springs, Colo.

Hazard: A ground clip inside the back plastic panel of these monitors can be incorrectly installed, posing a risk of electrical shock to consumers.

Incidents/Injuries: Philips has received one report of a consumer receiving an electrical shock from one of these monitors. The consumer was not injured.

Description: The recall involves only the HP L2035 Flat Panel Monitor with serial numbers ranging from CNP352Y001 to CNP423Y1HS. The model number is displayed at the bottom, center of the monitor's bezel, just above the control buttons. The recalled monitors were produced from December 2003 through June 2, 2004.

Sold by: HP's Web site for business use, and directly to business/corporate accounts. HP and its distributors also resold the monitors to HP's Channel Partners. The recalled monitors were sold by HP from February 2003 through October 2004 at retail for about \$900.

Manufactured In: China



Remedy: Consumers should unplug the monitor and either use a different computer to go to the recall Web site or contact the HP L2035 Recall Helpdesk for instructions on how to determine if their monitor is affected by this recall program. If affected, consumers will receive instructions for getting their monitor tested and repaired or replaced at no cost.

Consumer Contact: For more information, contact the recall Web site at www.l2035recall.com or the HP L2035 Recall Helpdesk at (800) 254-2280 between 8 a.m. and 9 p.m. ET Monday through Friday and between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. ET Saturday. Consumers also can write to Philips at North America Quality and Customer Care Manager, Philips PC Peripherals, Holly Sugar Boulevard, 2 North Cascade Ave, Suite 200, Colorado Springs, CO 80903.



iPod, You Pod, We all Pod

K. Joyce McDonald, Alamo PC

Joyce is a contract technical writer specializing in Internet/intranet infrastructure documentation. Visit her Internet domains at <www.jbmcdonaldandson.com> and <www.taichi-interactive.com>. E-mail her at <kjoycemcdonald@satx.rr.com>.

I read recently that the technology elite frequent spas to receive treatment for an ever-more-common malady: Blackberry hand. People who spend a lot of time sending e-mails on Blackberry® PDAs develop inflammation in their hands; thus some spas now offer the “Blackberry Massage”, using, appropriately, blackberry extract.

I don't own a Blackberry, but I have experienced a similar malady. I call it “Scrabble Hand.” I developed this malady from holding my Palm® PDA to play far too many games of Scrabble®. I may have discovered something to mitigate this malady, although the relief does not come from a spa. It comes from another technology device. I should qualify that this device doesn't actually alleviate the inflammation; it just allows my Scrabble hand to rest while I abuse the other hand. The instrument of change is popularly known as the iPod®.

All iPods feature a selection wheel that allows one-handed operation. When my hand and shoulder get too sore to play Scrabble, I switch hands and play one-handed Parachute or Solitaire on my iPod. I'm certain that this mode of operation must help develop brain cells as well, because it requires, at least for a Senior Citizen like me, a lot of manual dexterity and concentration to get the hang of it.

While I admire most features, I must complain about a couple of iPod's design flaws. The selection wheel operates much like the track wheel on a mouse. Instead of rolling up and down on the wheel, you slide your thumb around the perimeter of the wheel to scroll through menu options. The “enter” button is located in the center. When you find something you want, you press the hub of the wheel to select that item. If you want to return to the previous menu, you press the top edge of the wheel, which serves as the “Menu” button. Unfortunately, if arthritis or sight limitations come into play, it is very easy to press a little too high on the selection button, hitting the “Menu” button instead. If you're playing a song (and, yes, that's what the iPod is most often used for) backtracking isn't a real problem. However, if you are playing a game, hitting the Menu button ends the game and starts a new one. Since I tend to get clumsy when I get excited, this usually happens when I think I'm about to win at Solitaire or Parachute. I use the term “win” loosely because I have never won a game on my iPod. There seems to be a bug in the free program distributed with my particular model of iPod that causes the game to quit responding when I get close to winning.

The iPod is by design only passively interactive. You don't have any more control over the iPod than you do over your TV set, at least until you plug the device into your desktop computer. For that reason, although the iPod features calendar, contacts and games, it won't replace your PDA just yet. The up side is that its lack of interactive features and the manual dexterity required by the iPod interface makes me appreciate the control I can exert when playing games and performing tasks on my PDA.

With complaints out of the way I do like my iPod. First, and probably the primary reason for the iPod's popularity, is the control software that you install on your computer. The soft-



ware is simple to operate and, once installed, almost completely automatic. Plugging the iPod's cable into the computer's USB drive, assuming that the computer is turned on, automatically starts a download of any new songs or song information to the iPod. The iPod itself displays an icon telling you not to mess with it if it is still getting information from your computer. If you put new music on your computer, you can use the “File” menu on the desktop software to add a file or folder to your music library, then plug in the iPod to update it.

Mine is the brand new iPod Video. Although I got the device for the primary purpose of having all my music with me, I wanted the video feature to keep my Tai Chi videos available for review. Since my Tai Chi videos were captured and stored as .MOV files on my digital camera, we had to purchase a Quicktime Pro download (around \$30 from the Apple website) to convert the videos to MPEG4 format. Once

converted, the videos ran on my iPod with dazzling clarity and performed with much greater simplicity than they did in playback on my digital camera.

Another reason for my iPod purchase was my desire to experiment with podcasting. I first heard about podcasting for radio shows and thought it would be interesting to be able to download a talk radio show and listen to it at work where radio reception is fuzzy. Only a couple of weeks before I got my iPod, however, the video podcast blasted on the digital scene. The TV show "LOST" was a podcast pioneer, rapidly becoming the most popular to date. My husband downloaded an episode of "LOST" for me (\$1.99, also from the Apple website.)

My own prediction for video podcasting is that it will change the way people watch TV. My own experience will be typical. I took my iPod to work with me and watched a little of the show during lunch. I watched a little more a day later while I was waiting for my hair appointment. I finished watching the podcast

in bed. Then I watched it again. I have not purchased another episode of "LOST" only because I have to get some work done now and then. At two bucks per episode and \$34 for an entire season of "LOST" I have no doubt that when I free up some time, I'll be going back for more.

Also in the iPod's favor are the size of its storage drive, which can double as a backup drive for some of your important files; and the wealth of accessories available for it. Several manufacturers offer a device that fits in the cigarette lighter socket of your car and allows you to play the songs from your iPod through an unused frequency on your FM Radio.

To back up files to an iPod, all you have to do is hook the iPod to your desktop computer, open Windows Explorer, click "My Computer" and look for your iPod under the heading "Devices with Removable Storage." From there, you treat the iPod just as you would treat a floppy disk or the hard disk on your computer.



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Help take a bite out of spam



Bruce Cramer, Alamo PC

A+, Network+, Microsoft Certified Professional (Windows XP). Bruce is retired from the Army. He is the owner/operator of PC Pro Computer Services <www.pcpro4u.com> where he provides in-home/on-site computer services. He is a regular at the Doctors Is In on Friday mornings, at the Learning Center and has never met a piece of malware that he couldn't get rid of. Bruce can be reached by e-mail at <service@pcpro4u.com>. See his ad for PC Pro Computer Services on page 33.

The definition of spam is generally advertising for some product sent wide-scale to a mailing list or newsgroup. There are a number of ways you can find yourself on a spammer's email list, including signing up for newsletters that sell lists of their clients' email addresses, listing your email address on a webpage or newsgroup, or even by choosing an email address that spammers may be able to guess. It is not recommended that you use the opt out options that spammer offer. This is usually a line at the bottom of the email telling you that "if you do not wish to receive further email reply to this email." This will usually only verify to the spammer that they have a valid email address to send more spam to.



According to a report by e-mail researchers at the Radicati Group, there were 37.7 billion spam messages per day in 2004. That accounted for 49 percent of the 76.8 billion messages per day. Viruses, by comparison, accounted for half a billion messages per day, or 0.7 percent.

Late in 2004, Jeremy Jaynes of Raleigh, N.C., received a nine-year sentence for his conviction under Virginia law. Jaynes, who is free on \$1 million bond for his appeal, was using 16 high-speed lines to send more than 10 million e-mails per day.

But e-mail researchers have little hope that the conviction and other laws, such as CAN-SPAM, will turn around the trend toward more spam.

As you can see you can't depend on big brother to get rid of spam for you. In this column I will tell you about some of the things you can do to fight spam. Depending on your email client you may already have some sort of spam protection. For users of Outlook Microsoft has a built in spam filter that sends spam to a "Junk" folder. Many users however will find that doesn't catch near enough of the spam. Most of the major ISPs such as AOL and SBC Yahoo have their own flavor of anti-spam programs available for users and there is a plethora of anti-spam programs available for users of Outlook, Outlook Express, Eudora and other email clients.

Several of these anti-spam programs integrate seamlessly into your email client and filter out the offending spam sending it to a junk or deleted folder. Most anti-spam programs will also let you configure certain settings such as level of filtering, where to send spam i.e. junk, deleted or spam folder. I have tried several antispam programs. Two of the programs I have had success in using are Cloudmark Desktop, <www.cloudmark.com> and I Hate Spam, <<http://www.sunbelt-software.com/iHateSpam.cfm>> I like both of these programs because of their ease of use and dependability. They both have good detection rates and rarely flag "good" email. Both programs have a trail download and are relatively inexpensive.

While using anti-spam software is almost essential in today's computing world some spam will get by and some good email will get flagged so you will need to double check your spam, junk and or deleted folders from time to time.

Tips to avoid spam:

- Do use anti-spam software
- Do check your "spam" or "junk" folder
- Don't reply to spam
- Don't give out your email address to just anyone

Some people have opted for using a challenge and response system to verify email. How this works is when you send Joe an email you are sent an email from a server operated by the challenge and response system. This email tells you that Joe is using their system and that you can send him an email if you validate your email address by clicking a link to their site. Obviously the problem with this method is that most people don't want to take the extra step when emailing someone to validate their email address.

As I mentioned big brother can't do it all but he does make an effort to help with this problem. You can report spam to the Federal Trade Commission at <<http://www.ftc.gov/spam/>>. The FTC uses the spam stored in this database to pursue law enforcement actions against people who send deceptive email in severe cases. Another useful site on the fight against spam is <<http://spam.abuse.net/>> This site is run by Barracuda Networks, makers of filtering firewalls. The site offers some very good information on the subject of spam and some helpful links.

Several anti-spam programs also maintain databases which you can submit spam to. This allows them to keep their anti-spam signature files up to date. Anti-spam signatures are like anti-virus updates. Just as makers of viruses are always coming up with new demons to get past anti-virus programs, spammers are always trying to find new ways to fool spam filters, it is an ongoing battle.

Don't be fooled by the fools. Stay safe and happy computing.



Wireless Network Defense

Russell James, Alamo PC

Russell is General Manager at **BJ Associates of San Antonio, The Laptop Specialist**. They are an authorized service center for Toshiba and Sony systems. They are the laptop specialist and also handle system builds and parts for desktops. They take care of any IBM compatible hardware or software problem that you have. e-mail <russell@bjassociates.com> or visit them on the web at <<http://bjassociates.com>>.

High speed Internet access seems to have become the norm for most of us. I know when I have to use a modem for access I am amazed at how much time it takes for anything to happen. Can anyone else remember the 2400-baud modem? We thought that was fast when it came out and now I am griping about a 56000-baud connection. Amazing how fast we can get spoiled by technology.

Now the new rage is wireless technology. It is really a simple process to setup or even add to an existing network. By default, you should be able to plug a wireless router or access point in and connect your computers and browse the Internet without changing any settings. The problem is that this means that anyone parked in front of your house with a wireless card in a laptop can do the same thing.

Wi-Fi networks operate in the 2.4 and 5 GHz radio bands just like the cordless phones that most of us have become accustomed to. These radio technologies are called IEEE 802.11b, which connects at an 11 Mbps data rate and 802.11a and 802.11g, which connect at 54 Mbps. The signal will travel about the same distance for your wireless network as it would for a cordless phone. You can usually get a decent signal at about 150 feet inside a house or office. With direct line of site the typical range is about 500 feet. These distances can be increased with the use of directional antennas and repeaters.

As was mentioned earlier, this signal is available for anyone that can receive

it by default. There is no encryption by default. If you choose to leave your wireless network in this state, you will run the risk of someone being able to get into your network. If you trust everyone that drives by your house or business, feel free to leave encryption turned off. If you are like most people who would prefer to have a lock on the door to keep the honest people honest and the dishonest people out, look into encryption as well as a few other changes that are needed to help lock the door to your network.

First let's look at some simple solutions to help to keep your network safe. The first item that you need to change is the password for your router. Anyone who is looking for a wireless network and sees the name Linksys listed will try admin as the password since that is how they all are shipped. Change the password as soon as you setup the router. Do not use the address or your first or last name since those would be too easy to guess.

The next item to change is the name of the SSID and turn the radio signal off. As long as you do not give it a name that is too simple, whoever is driving by will first need to know that you have a wireless network. Then they will have to guess the name of your SSID since the radio signal is now not broadcasting this information out. Then they will have to crack your encryption key. You have now given them more information that they will need to know to get into your system, which in turn will help to keep them out.

Now let's take a look at the choices that are available for encrypting the data that is being transferred from your access

point to your wireless device. There are currently two available with the third slated for approval sometime in the second half of 2004.

The original and most common is called Wired Equivalent Privacy or WEP. This encryption is better than nothing but has been found to be fundamentally weak because it uses a static encryption key. Because of this, an attacker can easily crack WEP encryption by using hacking tools that are freely available on the Internet. You would have to change the key on both the access point and the wireless device on a regular basis to help to insure the security of your network.

Wi-Fi Protected Access or WPA is the newest member on the block. It utilizes a setup password to secure the network. WPA also utilizes 128-bit encryption as well as dynamic session keys. This means that the passkey that is entered into your access point and your laptop is changed with every frame that is transmitted. This helps to insure that your network stays secure since the key that is being passed between the devices will be different with every packet and therefore will be harder to crack.

Wi-Fi access is not that difficult if you take the time to learn a little about the tools that are available. It could be that you will never have a problem without the encryption, the name change or turning the radio off. The question is, are you willing to take that chance with the data that is stored on your computers?

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Preventative Maintenance Part VIII

Bill Beverley, Alamo PC

Bill is retired military and an intermediate computer enthusiast who has been an APCO member for six years. He has contributed for the past five years.

When purchasing new computers, many buyers also buy extended warranties for them. There are two sides to this issue. One is that retailers push extended warranties hard because they're almost pure profits. By buying one, you're betting that your computer will break down, that the extended warranty will cover the problem, and that repairing it would cost you more than the extended warranty.

Extended warranties typically cost between 10 and 30% of a product's purchase price. For the individual computer user, financial planners recommend making your purchase using a credit card that ensures the manufacturer's basic warranty and then putting the cost of the extended warranty into a repair or replacement fund. Often, by the time you need that money, you'll probably have saved enough to replace the nonworking technical product. If you still want the extended service plan, read the fine print carefully and just don't rely on the salesperson's assurances. Recognize that you're paying more for peace of mind than the service.

The second side to this issue is that most computers are amazingly reliable if maintained properly with updates and security programs. However, computers can work well for months and then suddenly develop some type of problem. They usually aren't difficult to fix, but diagnosing them can be a real challenge. Therefore you should consider getting at least a basic or short warranty if you have friends or employees who can fix your computer problems. However, if you want someone else to fix your computer, look at a three-year warranty with on-site service. If the computer is in a business then it is mission-critical, you'll want next-day service, too. A four-year warranty is problematical since most computers are approaching obsolescence after three years. A four-year warranty is only worthwhile if you feel sure you'll keep the machine that long. Some computer repair shops replace worn or defective parts with refurbished one. You should ask for new parts just to preclude refurbished ones from being put into your computer.

Computer Problem Prevention

To prevent computer problems, here are some useful tips: keep your antivirus software updated, run a full system virus scan frequently; and use a firewall; install only utilities with good reputations; backup files constantly; don't open attachments from unknown senders; run Disk Cleanup and Disk Defrag at least once a month; and lastly, if your machine is running well, don't try to make it run faster. For your computer to have as few problems as possible, get WinXP and all critical updates. Only get the specific XP update(s). Visit blackvip.com to trim your services. The only "utilities" you need are AdAware or Spybot, and McAfee or Norton anti-virus software programs. Only update a driver if you are having a problem and then only get it from the manufacturer. Windows has a defragger built in to your computer. You won't need a registry cleaner if you limit your third-party software.

Free Software

There are a number free computer software programs which will enhance the security and operation of your computer. Some of the better antispyware programs include: Ad-Aware SE Personal 1.06; Microsoft Windows AntiSpyware (beta); Spybot Search & Destroy 1.4, AntiVir PersonalEdition Classic, avast! 4 Home Edition; and AVG Free Edition. These programs rank high in quality and feature sets available to the user.

Virtual Memory

Virtual memory is nothing more than storing what Windows cannot fit into the RAM (Random Access Memory) memory onto a temporary area of your hard disk. Virtual memory is also called the "Swap" file. The virtual memory settings in Win98/Me can be found by going to the Control Panel and selecting the System icon. Click the Performance tab, and then the Virtual Memory button. However you should exercise caution when changing these settings. With WinXP, you need a minimum of 256 megabytes of RAM. Theoretically, you can get by with less. But, once Windows and a second large program, like Word, have loaded, RAM will overflow and virtual memory will begin to fill up. Open more programs and you have a problem. If editing photos or videos, you may need 512 MB of memory. To see how much memory you have, click Start, Control Panel and double-click System. On the General tab, total memory will be listed near the bottom. If you receive "low virtual memory messages," enlarge the area set aside for virtual memory. To do that, click Start, Control Panel, double-click System, and select the Advanced tab. Under Performance, click Settings and select the Advanced tab. Find Virtual Memory at the bottom of the window, and click Change and click the option button next to "Custom Size." The minimum should be 1.5 times your memory size. The maximum should be 3 times your memory. If you continue to have problems, raise the maximum and keep raising it until you no longer get the message.

Virus

You will know if your computer has a virus if it reacts in one or more of the following ways. One, your computer freezes up on you during start up or while working on it. Two, the computer continuously loses your Internet connection. Three, you notice e-mail leaving your e-mail box when you have not sent any. Four, the computer shuts down during your sessions or interrupts you with various error messages. Lastly, you are unable to use certain programs or open certain documents because of a lack of memory when there should be plenty available. The

most common types of attachments that contain virus' are: .com, .exe, .dll, .ovr, and .ovl extensions. If your computer has a virus which you can't seem to shake, check this site for free downloadable files to wipe that virus out of your system <http://www.pandasoftware.es/library/pqremove_en.htm>.

WinDriversBackup

When you need to reinstall your system, one of the most frustrating parts of the job is to locate and reload all those drivers. What you need is a program to back up the files for you. One such program is called WinDriversBackup Personal Edition <http://www.jermar.com/wdrvbk.htm>. This is a freeware utility for personal, non-commercial use, from JerMar Software Corp.

WinFind

WinFind <www.briansbuzz.com> is a new, specialized Windows tips search engine that's free for your use. This service indexes more than a dozen Web sites packed with extensive and reliable Windows guidance. To see the list of indexed sources, click Advanced Search. On the advanced page you can search all the Windows tips sites simultaneously or pick just one or two to hone your query.

Win95 Computer Crashes

If you are still using Win95 and have noticed that your computer crashes periodically from time to time, it may be due to a bug that has affected this operating system since initial release. Microsoft has confirmed that a time problem in the Vidapi.vxd file will cause Win95 to crash after every 49.7 days of continuous operation. Many early Win95 installations crashed even more frequently. Visit the Microsoft Download Center <www.microsoft.com/downloads> and select Win95 from the Product/Technology drop-down menu. Type vidapi95.exe in the Keywords field and click the Go button. Download the file to your desktop or any other location. Next locate the file on your system and double-click it. After you install the file, restart your computer.

Windows Error Reporting

WinXP Error Reporting has an added new feature. Windows Error Reporting: Recommended Update 821253 will let you automatically view responses to Windows error reports. After submitting an error report, you can view any available responses related to the crash event, such as a fix, workaround, or other information, immediately and automatically. This update applies to any computer running WinXP or WinXP SP1. You can use the Add or Remove Programs utility in the Control Panel to remove the update. The update is 346 KB and takes about two minutes to download. After installing this item, you may have to restart your computer.

Windows Shutdown Fix

Microsoft has posted a fix that you can download and install on your 98 system. This fix deals with a known problem in Win98 that prevents Shutdown from behaving properly. You can also get this fix by updating Win98 from Microsoft's update web site for Win98 <<http://www.microsoft.com/windows98/downloads/corporate.asp>>.

Windows XP SP2

Some computers may freeze during the SP2 installation especially if they are using a motherboard BIOS (Basic Input/Output System) that does not include support for certain Intel Pentium 4 and Intel Celeron D processors. To download the 459KB update that will help fix this bug, type in <<http://www.microsoft.com/downloads>> in the Address field of your browser window. After Microsoft's Download Center page loads, type KB885626 in the Keywords text box and click Go. Click the link named Critical Update For Windows XP (KB885626) and, on the right side of the page, click Download to begin the file transfer. When the file transfer is complete, double-click the file (WindowsXP-KB885626v2=x86-enu.exe) and follow the on-screen prompts to complete the installation.

Windows Updates

To update a computer with Windows Updates and there's only one dial-up capability, then you might want to use a friend's computer with a cable connection to download and save these files to a CD.

First, go to the update site (in Internet Explorer, click Tools, Windows Update). Run a scan to see what the computer needs and make a list of the required updates. Then, on the download computer, go to Windows Update again and click Windows Update Catalog in the left panel. If it is not there, click Personalize Windows Update. Click the box to display the Update Catalog, and Save Settings. After clicking Windows Update Catalog, click "Find updates for Microsoft Windows operating systems." Now select the correct operating system and click Search. Next click Critical Updates and Service Packs, find the necessary updates, and click Add for each. When finished, click Go to Download Basket, the Browse button to select your download folder, and click Download Now. If you install a Window Updates then have some problem with your computer, there are several options to solve this problem. The easiest is to simply delete it. To do that, click Start, Control Panel and the double-click Add or Remove Programs. The updates are at the end of the list. Find the one you want to delete, highlight it, and click Remove. If you can't solve the problem through the deletion, try using System Restore. With it, you can return Windows to its state before it was updated. Click Start, All Programs, Accessories, System Tools, System Restore. System Restore does not affect other programs. When you installed shareware, System Restore will not remove it. Once you have removed an update, you should reinstall it. This step may seem counterintuitive, but this action will repair security problems. Without the update, you could have a vulnerable computer. Hopefully, the installation will work better the second time around.

Windows Longhorn/Vista will be released in seven separate versions in late 2006. There will be two low-end versions, Starter and Home; a Web Server version; a Professional N version (which is the basic Pro analog); Small Business; Enterprise; and Ultimate. A Microsoft licensing Webcast announced that Windows Vista Enterprise will be available only to customers of the Software Assurance or Select License purchasing programs. Vista Enterprise really is aimed at larger companies.



Troubleshooting SBS backup

Larry Lentz, MCSE+I & W2K, MCDBA, MCSA:Messaging W2K3

Larry Lentz is an MCSE + Internet, an MCSE on Windows 2000, a Microsoft Certified Database Administrator, an MCSA: Messaging on Windows Server 2003 and Exchange 2003, and Past President of Alamo PC. He is the owner of Lentz Computer Services, www.LentzComputer.Net, which he founded in 1989. Larry has over 22 years as a computer professional and specializes in Microsoft Small Business Server. He chairs the MCSE Advanced SIG affectionately called 'The Geeks' and the Alamo PC Small Business Server Special Interest Group (SBS SIG). Larry is available for presentations on technology for small business and can be reached via e-mail at Larry@LentzComputer.Net

Recently a client asked me to configure their new Small Business Server 2003 server. Since the server came with no appropriate backup device, I installed a nice big tape drive and configured SBS to perform nightly full system backups. I also configured it to e-mail me and the owner a report each morning on the success or failure of the backup. Unfortunately the reports consistently said the backup had failed! However on inspection I could tell that the backup did in fact run and that most everything, especially his important data, was in fact being backed up.

Some files which were in use were skipped. Windows Server 2003, upon which SBS 2003 is founded, contains a feature called Volume Shadow Copy Service (VSS). VSS basically takes a periodic 'snapshot' of files, even if they are in use. The backup utility that comes with Windows Server 2003 uses this to take snapshots of open files and then backup the snapshot. This apparently was not happening. The backup log contained the clue, "Error returned while creating the volume shadow copy: 800423f4 Reverting to non-shadow copy backup mode." After a bit of head scratching off to the Microsoft SBS newsgroup, microsoft.public.windows.server.sbs, I went. I posted a message indicating I was experiencing skipped files and suspected a problem with VSS. I soon found I had a lot of company. There were a number of suggestions including one referring to the reference at the end of the log (*For more information about failed backups, see the article on troubleshooting your backup at the following Web page:* <http://go.microsoft.com/fwlink/?LinkId=18414>) to Microsoft's Windows Small Business Server 2003 Troubleshooting guide (http://download.microsoft.com/download/5/6/1/561c9fd7-0e27-4525-94ec-4d2d38f61aa3/TSHT_SBS.htm). This appears to be a very useful document with instructions on how to resolve a large number of problems that night we encountered with SBS 2003. I have now downloaded it to my Pocket PC so I can keep it handy. Included is a major section on **Troubleshooting Backup and Restore** with a subsection on how to deal

with VSS related issues. There were several suggestions to resolve VSS starting with checking the maximum size of the Event Viewer logs. If the log size exceeds 64 MB, you should reduce it to 64000 KB or less. I checked and found at least one log was over 64 MB. I reduced it to about 32 MB.

Next was to check whether Directory Services auditing was enabled and to disable it if it was. This did not appear to be the case. However had it been so, the troubleshooting guide gives specific instructions on disabling it.

Next was "to verify that a drive with Volume Shadow Copies Services enabled has low disk space." To check on this, you must open My Computer and right-click the system drive. From the Properties menu select the Shadow Copies tab. In the *Select a volume* window I noticed that under the *Next Run Time* column it said 'Disabled'! Ah ha thinks I! This could be the problem. I clicked on the *Enable* button to configure Shadow Copies on that drive.

Next in the troubleshooting guide was a check of the SQL databases. Apparently if a database's recovery model is not set to 'Simple', VSS may fail. To check this, go to the SQL Enterprise Manager, expand your server and then expand Databases. Right-click each database in turn and select Properties. From there select the Options tab. Right in the middle is the Recovery Model with a drop down box. From there you can select Bulk-Logged, Full, or Simple. The meaning of each is beyond the scope of

this article. However, for VSS to work for the backup, you want them all to be Simple. I checked each one and found a couple that were set to Full. I changed these to Simple, of course.

Lastly, I went to SBS Server Management console and selected the Information Center. From here I went to Downloads and Updates. This takes you to the Microsoft Downloads for Windows Small Business Server 2003 web page. Here I noticed an update for a problem with the POP3 connector, *Update for Microsoft Connector for POP3 Mailboxes Consuming 100% of CPU While Downloading Messages*. Since we are using the POP3 connector and we were often receiving alerts that the system was using a large amount of memory, I decided to install this. There was another update relating to the tape drive, *Update for Backup Attempts Failing With a Tape Device That Supports Multiple Tape Types*. Even though this didn't directly apply to our problem, I decided to install it as well.

Having done all this, I packed up and went home. The next morning I anxiously checked my e-mail looking for the daily report from the server. There it was. I opened it and scrolled down. The backup had succeeded! Although, I did violate one of the tenets of troubleshooting, change one thing at a time. I think the change that made the difference was enabling Shadow Copy on the system drive. Oh, and we haven't seen any more of those pesky high memory utilization messages.



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More about Vista

Collected by Pim Borman,

SW Indiana PC Users Group, Inc., IN; <<http://swipcug.apcug.org/>>

Vista... “A distant view or prospect, especially one seen through an opening, as between rows of buildings or trees.” (Dictionary.com)

It is also the name of the long-awaited next version of Microsoft Windows, not available until at least the second half of 2006 but already widely previewed and discussed in the PC magazines. What do we glimpse in the distance? Should we fight or switch?

The most significant improvement in Vista might well be security, stated to be a primary goal. Only time will tell – we’ll still be facing continuing patches, updates and periodic Service Packs, I expect.

New Internet Explorer 7 will be a major make-over, mostly to catch up with features long since available in Opera and Firefox. It will also be available to current Windows XP users. Windows Media Player gets a boost, but will also be available in Windows XP.

Vista will appear in 32 and 64-bit versions, to accommodate the new 64-bit CPUs now available from AMD and Intel. Visually, the windows will sport new folder icons that show thumbnails of their contents, although I wonder how they handle folders with dozens of subfolders and files. If your graphics card can handle it, the icons will also be semi-transparent, wow!

Originally, Vista was supposed to support a new file system, WINFS. I understand that this file system does away with branching directory trees to store files. Instead, files all get dumped in large containers, maybe such as the current “My Documents” areas. Instead of assigning unique file names you label the files with any number of suitable tags, similar to the labels currently used in Picasa2 (see the minutes in this issue to read about Larry Goss’s presentation in October). The contents of the files are also indexed on the go to facilitate a search for keywords such as already provided by Google Desktop Search and Yahoo Desktop Search. Vista is expected to include a similar search function even before WINFS eventually is implemented. But WINFS will not initially be part of Vista.

As PC Magazine puts it “... it increasingly appears that Vista’s differentiating features, aside from the sleek new shell interface, will be the ones that are less visible to typical users: hardened security, better diagnostics, and improved manageability in enterprise environments.”

Vista will require an up-to-date computer system, with plenty of processor speed, memory, and graphics capability. Manufacturers of scanners and printers will surely provide the necessary drivers for newer equipment, but older peripherals may no longer work. Will it be worth the additional cost and aggravation to upgrade?

Dedicated gamers will love it – they need all the speed they can get, at any cost. Also, if you work with demanding graphics programs, large databases or similar CPU-intensive programs you’ll probably want Vista for better support of multi-core, 64-bit CPUs. Media enthusiasts will love the new features, but why use them on a general-purpose computer?

For the rest of us, we’re probably better off waiting until we need to buy a new computer that is almost certain to include Vista, whether we like it or not. At least we’ll get it at a discount. I estimate that MS Windows, Office and Media Player contain at least 50% bells and whistles that are of no interest to 75% of its users.

Last year Microsoft announced a crippled version of Windows, called Windows XP Starter Edition, being made available at low cost in certain developing countries. According to CNet News.com (<http://snipurl.com/winstart>) the local versions of the program were made available in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, India and Russia. Cost in Thailand was reported to be \$36, not including MS Works. Its intended use is in local schools for the obvious reason: catch ‘em young. Read on...

...Or Else?

“The MIT Media Lab has launched a new research initiative to develop a \$100 laptop—a technology that could revolutionize how we educate the world’s children. To achieve this goal, a new, non-profit association, One Laptop per Child (OLPC), has been created.”

“The machines, which will run a version of the Linux operating system, will also include other applications, some developed by MIT researchers, as well as country-specific software. ‘Software has gotten too fat and unreliable, so we started with Linux.’” (<http://snipurl.com/mitlap>)

These two quotes from recent MIT press releases point at new directions in the Computer Revolution. First of all, there is the realization that computers are here to stay as a basic necessity in a civilized society. To the three Rs of basic education we need to add a fourth Requirement, computer literacy. The cost of general purpose computers has to come down further to make them available to every school child, even in this country, let alone in the developing nations. That clearly includes the need to eliminate the high cost of the MS Windows operating system and commercial productivity programs written for MS Windows. Essentially free Linux is the obvious alternative.

Here is another quote, from [desktop.linux.com](http://snipurl.com/INaccess) (<http://snipurl.com/INaccess>): “A number of Indiana high school students returning for the fall semester will find brand-new Linux desktops in their classrooms. Under the Indiana Access Program, which uses desktop Linux systems and standard hardware configurations to keep costs low, Wintergreen Systems Inc. and Linspire Inc. are providing computers for classrooms. The arrangement could result in as many as 300,000 Linux machines being deployed during coming years, the companies said in a statement.” And Indiana is arguably not a third-world nation.



User Stories Part III

Shane Hicks, (certified certifiable)

Shane uses a PC. He wants someone to show him how to get work done with Linux. E-mail him at <shane@vpwn.com.>

What would we do without our blessed users?

#18: World Travel

A tech got a call from one of the users he supports. The user was preparing for an extended trip overseas. He wanted to know what cables he'd need in this foreign country to use the mouse and external floppy for his laptop.

#19: It's Not Always the Users Fault

Providing university technical support can be difficult due to the sheer numbers of students and faculty that require service. Techs encourage problems be submitted on-line. One student cornered a tech as he was leaving, claiming he had a problem. The tech told the student to e-mail the problem to him. The tech encountered the student on several occasions, always as he was leaving the building. "Look," the tech said. "I told you to e-mail me. I haven't received your e-mail, so I haven't fixed your problem." The student stammered helplessly. This went on for a week before the tech received e-mail from the student's friend, saying the student's e-mail wasn't working. After the tech fixed the problem (which was on the server), he received about 10 e-mails from the original student very politely asking to have his e-mail fixed.

#20: Stupid User Tricks

Some techs have too much free time on their hands.

One related to me his favorite way to reset users passwords to DONTKNOW. The conversation with the user then went something like this. "What did you reset my password to?" "DONTKNOW," the tech replied. "What do you mean you don't know, didn't you reset it?" "Yes," the tech would respond. "So what is it?" "DONTKNOW," he'd say again. "What?" "DONTKNOW." "Why don't you know?" "Your password has been reset to D-O-N-T-K-N-O-W," the tech would spell out over the phone. "We reset it because you didn't know it—seemed logical to me!"

#21: More Printer Problems

A tech was assisting an administrative assistant who was frantically trying to get some letters printed out for a ceremony to honor her retiring boss. All the letters were coming out with a symmetrical defect on every page. The tech asked her what she'd been doing before the problem started. She told him she'd just finished printing out all the mailing labels to go on the envelopes. An inspection of the labels revealed that one was missing. It's stuck inside the laser printer.

#22: Is the Door Shut?

A guy was having trouble with 5 1/4" floppy drive. He couldn't access the disk. The tech asked him if the door was closed. The guy put the phone down, walked across his office, and shut the office door. He got back on the phone with tech support saying, "It is now."

#23: Taking Viruses Seriously

One user reportedly asked a technician if he needed to go to the doctor to get a shot to protect himself from the latest computer virus going around.

#24: I'm Not That Dumb!

Tech support for a local public relations firm related the following story. A user called to complain about how slow her laptop was. The user had been given the tech's old laptop. He was aware it was fairly fast and could handle anything she was trying to do with it. She complained that she'd been at a client site giving a PowerPoint presentation. The slide transitions crawled, taking 10-30 seconds per slide. The tech thought and asked, "Are you running the slides off a floppy?" She responded indignantly, "No, I'm not that dumb. I ran it off the network." The tech asked how she ran it from the network when she was at the client site. She'd dialed-in with the laptop and was running her presentation over the phone.

#25: Total Compression

A user recently complained that the hi-speed computer I'd recently helped him acquire wasn't running high speed at all. In fact, he'd optimized the system and it was taking forever just to open basic documents. I told him it tested fine when we installed it at his location. I asked what additional optimizations he'd made to the system. He told me he'd been running Disk Cleanup and it told him he needed to compress his hard drive to free more space, even though he was only using 4 out of 80GB on his hard drive. When I looked at the machine, I realized he'd somehow compressed EVERY file on the computer—to include all system files.

#26: Mouse Pad Not Big Enough

At an advertising firm, where employees were given large monitors with lots of on-screen real estate, a user complained that her mouse pad wasn't big enough. She couldn't get her cursor to move all the way across the screen. Her optical mouse stopped moving the pointer when the mouse slid off the pad. It never occurred to her to pick the mouse up and reposition it.

#27: Intermittent Problem

A tech reported a phone call he received recently. The user stated that whenever she hits the spacebar on her newly installed keyboard, one of the phones in one of the other cubicles would ring—but not all the time. She asked when this intermittent problem would be fixed.

The Switcher



...the ongoing tale of a Man and his Mac More Stuff for Mac

Shane's a Mac user. Assist in his quest to learn OS X — e-mail him at [<mac@vpwn.com>](mailto:mac@vpwn.com).

More Collected Downloads

This month, I'm providing links to more interesting downloads I've discovered over the last few months. I hope you find these links to be useful.

1. Google Maps Plugin 2.2.1

You may be aware that if you right-click or press the control key on a contact's address in your Address Book, you can choose to get a MapQuest.com map providing a route from your default address to that of your contact. However, if you prefer the maps provided by Google, you can use Brian Toth's FREE Google Maps Plugin 2.2.1 [<www.briantoth.com>](http://www.briantoth.com) to use Google instead.

2. R-Name 3.0

When downloading files (especially music files) from the Internet, there can often seem to be no logic in how individuals name their files. Managing these file names can be a nightmare. To help in this situation, download Yogurt of Technology's FREE R-Name 3.0 [<www.macworld.com/0752>](http://www.macworld.com/0752) that will allow you to change text in a file name, change cases, change extensions, and sequentially name entire groups of files.

3. Cyberduck

For those of you who find yourself in need of transferring files via FTP, this FREE utility allows you to do just that. It's been around for awhile, has a lot of features, and can be downloaded from [<http://cyberduck.ch/>](http://cyberduck.ch).

4. NeoOffice

For those of you who abhor having ANYTHING Microsoft on your Mac, there's a FREE office suite alternative available to you. The entire suite can be used advertisement and nag free and can be downloaded from [<www.neooffice.org>](http://www.neooffice.org).

New Class Starting

Student Practice Lab - A specific time period for students taking Alamo PC Courses to use Computer Lab (Classroom One) to practice their class assignments. Students may also make up missed class days, if the instructor has provided the course material to the individual. Seating is limited and on a first come, first serve basis.

Pre-registration is required. Call (210) 736-0080, or (210) 736-0700

More Widgets

1. WidgetTerm

For users who like to get in and out of the command line interface (Terminal), this is the widget for you. It provides a resizable shell inside Dashboard that can simply be put away when you are not using it www.macworld.com/0749.

2. Wimic

This is a cool widget for comic lovers. It allows you to view a selection from over 75 different comic strips from a simple drop down menu in Dashboard www.macworld.com/0750

More Tips

1. If you've erased your Mac hard drive and performed a clean installation of OS X 10.4 Tiger, you may notice that the Classic OS 9 operating environment is no longer available to you. That's because Tiger doesn't install the components needed to make this happen. All you need to do is mount the installation discs that came with your system and use the Install Additional Software installer located on the Additional Software & AHT disc (or you may find this installer on other recovery discs from Apple if you have an earlier set of restore discs).

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Hosting

Susan Ives, Alamo PC

Susan Ives is a former president of Alamo PC. She archives these columns on her Web site, <www.susanives.com/>. If you visit, you can cut-and-paste the code instead of retyping it from the magazine – the ultimate in lazy Webmastering!

After you design your Web site you need a place to host it. A Web host is a service that gives you space on their server, a computer that is configured for public access to Web sites.

1. Paid Shared Hosted Site: This is by far the most popular solution. Web hosting companies will host your site and register your domain name for a modest monthly fee. You will be sharing a remote computer with many other hosted Web sites. Two companies that I have used are Hosting Matters <www.hostingmatters.com> and 5 Dollar Hosting <www.5dollarhosting.com>. For less than \$100 per year you can get a year's worth of Web space and get a registered domain name <www.yourname.com>. Everything is arranged online with a credit card, and your name and space should be ready to use in a day or two. Two terms you need to know:

- **Storage space:** This is the megabytes (MB) of files that you can store on a server. At the least expensive level this is usually 25MB. Most Web sites will easily fit in this amount of space.

- **Data Transfer/Mo:** Each time someone views the front page of the SAVAE site <www.savae.org> they transfer 15 files totaling 41KB. If he or she clicks on the "Music" link they transfer another 34KB. If they decide to listen to the audio clip of Mananitas, they are transferring 125KB more. At the least expensive level you will get 2-5 gigabytes (GB) of data transfer per month. If you exceed it the Web host will alert you and charge you more or, if you prefer, close down your site for the remainder of the month.

Don't buy more than you need, but make sure you can scale up if your needs change.

For example, you might not need a shopping cart with the ability to accept secure transactions on your initial business Web site, but if this is in your future plans, make sure that it is available. Same with SQL (Structured Query Language), a standard interactive and programming language for getting information from and updating a database.

Some Web hosts will provide tools to make it easier to construct and design your site. Yahoo, for example <webhosting.yahoo.com>, offers a program called Site Builder, that walks you through menus to design your site.

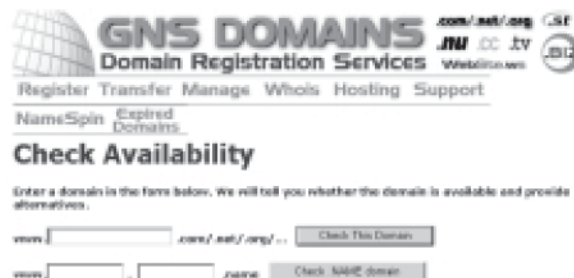
If you use Microsoft Front Page make sure that your host supports Front Page Extensions. Also, make sure it supports FTP and doesn't require you to use a clunky Web-based interface to upload your files to their server.

Most of the Web hosts will also give you free e-mail addresses and other services, but note that your Web hosting does NOT include basic Internet access – you're just buying space for your Web site, not access to the Internet.

Most Web hosting services offer a complete package – you can register your domain name, contract for the space and be online within a day or so.

One of the advantages of having your own domain name is that you can transfer your hosting service to another company and still keep the same Web address. Take the time to make the best choice for your needs, but take comfort in knowing that if it doesn't work out you can always switch.

2. Free Web Hosts. This is free service that you pay for indirectly by agreeing to include advertising on your site. Some of the most popular are Tripod <www.tripod.lycos.com/>, Angelfire <angelfire.lycos.com/> and Geocities <geocities.yahoo.com/>. All of these include Web page building tools that use templates and wizards to help you build your site, or you can design them from scratch. The advertising - popup ads - are added automatically by the service. All of these also allow you to upgrade your service, for a fee, to eliminate the ads or use your own domain name. Your address will look something like <www.geocities.com/yourname>. Free is good, but most people find popup ads irritating. Use this for a personal site, but not for a business one.



3. ISP hosted services. Many Internet Service Providers — the company you get your basic Internet service from — include some free Web space. The address of such a site will look something like <yourname.ispname.com> or <www.ispname.com/~yourname>.

Some ISPs restrict the kind of site you can host for free - some prohibit business sites.

Contact your ISP to see if they offer free Web space.

It is, of course, possible to manage your own server, but this is complicated, expensive and beyond the scope of the Lazy Webmaster.

This is a decision you don't have to make right away - your Web site can be designed totally off-line and only uploaded to the public server when you are ready to go public.

The extra experience and breathing space might give you more data to ensure you are making the right decision.

STUDY GROUPS

Call the Learning Center for schedule information 736-0700 or see page 59-63.



Playing with blending modes

Paul Vaughn, Alamo PC

Paul Vaughn is a freelance graphic artist, writer and web designer who has yet to object to anything smart. If you would like to see the Graphics Guy address a specific topic, email Paul Vaughn at <paulv@mac.com>.

The last two months, I have addressed using layers and masks in **Adobe Photoshop** to create sophisticated composite images. This month we move to a related

for users of **Photoshop Elements**, this is one of the features that **Adobe** did not include so you can skip to the next paragraph. In a Layer Mask, white makes the layer opaque and black makes it transparent. Shades of gray give levels of translucence. All of the usual painting tools can be used on a Layer Mask including Brushes and Gradients. Figure 2 shows an image with a gradation on a Layer Mask.

differently than simply being transparent or translucent. The default blending mode is 'Normal,' but there are several others (Fig 3). Experimentation is the best way to learn how these different modes will affect your specific images, but here are some general principles.

The most useful blending modes are 'Multiply' and 'Screen.' These are basically opposites of each other. Multiply mode makes everything in the layer that is white to be completely transparent and everything that is black to be completely opaque. Shades of gray will have an equivalent degree of opacity. Screen mode makes white areas opaque and black areas clear. These modes are used most often for shadows and glows. Multiply mode is also useful for fixing

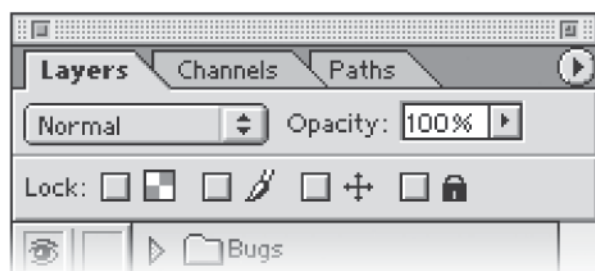


fig. 1

Blending Modes allow layers to behave

topic, transparency and compositing or blending modes. These tools are also available in **Photoshop Elements** and other image editing programs.

Photoshop's Layers palette is the control center for all of these tools (Fig 1). At the top is an Opacity slider and pop-up menu of Blending Modes. The Opacity slider is very straightforward. At 100% opacity, that layer is totally visible and covers up any image beneath it. At 0%, the layer is totally transparent, the layer beneath shows through. Any number in between can be used for varying levels of opacity. Multiple layers can be composited diaphanously for an artistic effect.

Layer Masks allow for more control of transparency. Unfortunately

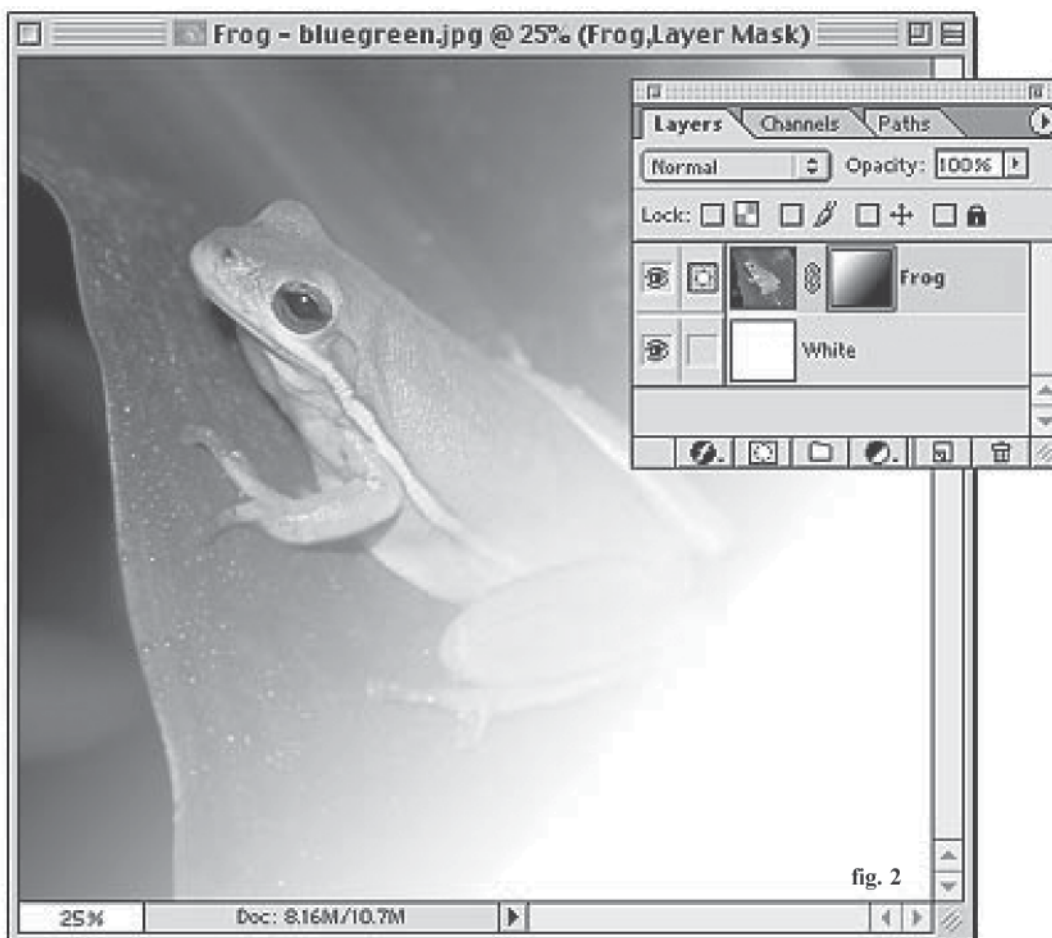


fig. 2

a faded photograph. The procedure is simple. Duplicate the background, put the new layer in Multiply mode, and adjust the opacity until you get the desired effect.

'Overlay,' 'Soft Light' and 'Hard Light' modes are cool effects; I usually find them the most useful for reflections, lighting effects or shading. In each of these modes, 50% gray is transparent. 'Color Burn' and 'Color Dodge' are neat, but are rarely used. 'Darken' and 'Lighten' modes are self-explanatory. Pixels in layers set to 'Darken' mode will only be visible if the pixels on layers beneath are lighter in tone. 'Lighten' works the opposite. These can be used for glows and shadows, but don't work as well as Multiply and Screen. 'Difference' and 'Exclusion' modes help to make that trippy-looking computer art we all know and love.

Photoshop gives you a set of tools that can be combined in countless ways to help you create the images in your mind. Using layer transparency and blending modes can give your images a depth and complexity that would be difficult to achieve otherwise.

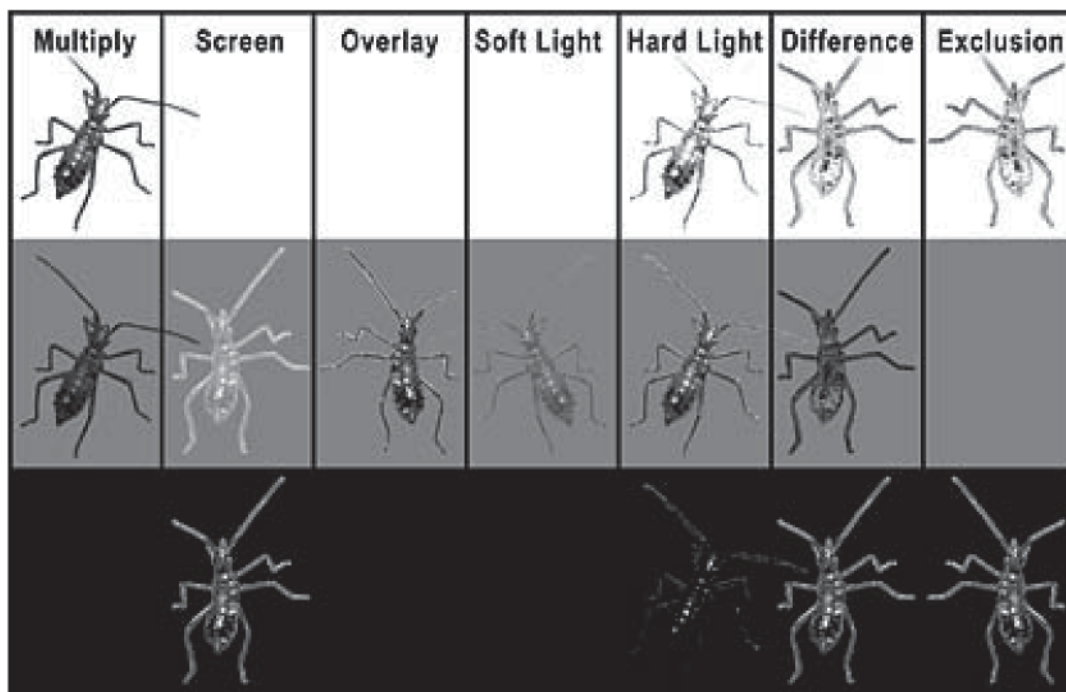


fig. 3

New Class Starting

Student Practice Lab - A specific time period for students taking Alamo PC Courses to use Computer Lab (Classroom One) to practice their class assignments. Students may also make up missed class days, if the instructor has provided the course material to the individual. Seating is limited and on a first come, first serve basis.

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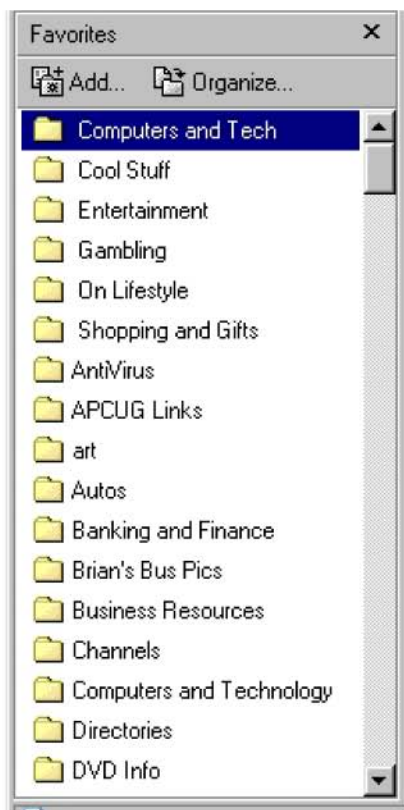


Internet Explorer - Favorites

Ron Ingraham, Space Coast PC User Group

Ron is a member of Space Coast PC Users Group. Instructions in this column were created on a Windows 98 system. E-mail Ron at <ringram728@earthlink.net>

Last month we finished up the Search button and its drop-down menus. Next on the bar is Favorites. When you click on it, a sidebar appears on the left of your active window as below. When you click on the Add



icon, the item will be added to a specific location, usually a folder. In my case, many of my favorites were simply added to the general list rather than to a folder. The general list is not visible at left because the list is designed to place the folders at the beginning. This of course is pretty sloppy housekeeping, resulting in a long list of individual, unrelated items. This is where the folders come in.

If I am in the



of which is seen at the left. You'll notice that a New Folder button has been added. To create a new folder, click on the button which will open the window seen below. In this case I have given the folder this name partly because it will appear alphabetically in the list. (The other reason is that I



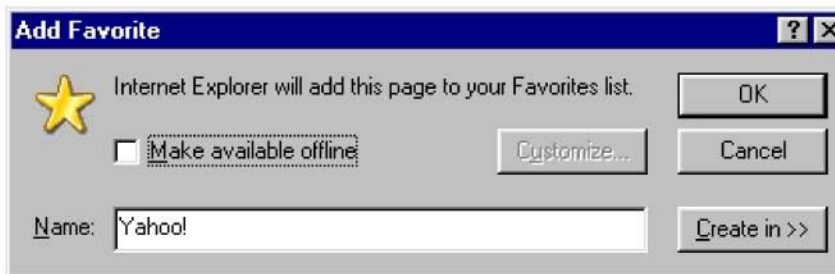
have just had my gall bladder removed in this fashion.)

Clicking OK adds the new folder to the list of favorites as seen at right. You should observe that the new folder was placed in the list in the correct alphabetical order. This is a little



confusing, since the first time you look for it, it will be at the bottom of the General list.

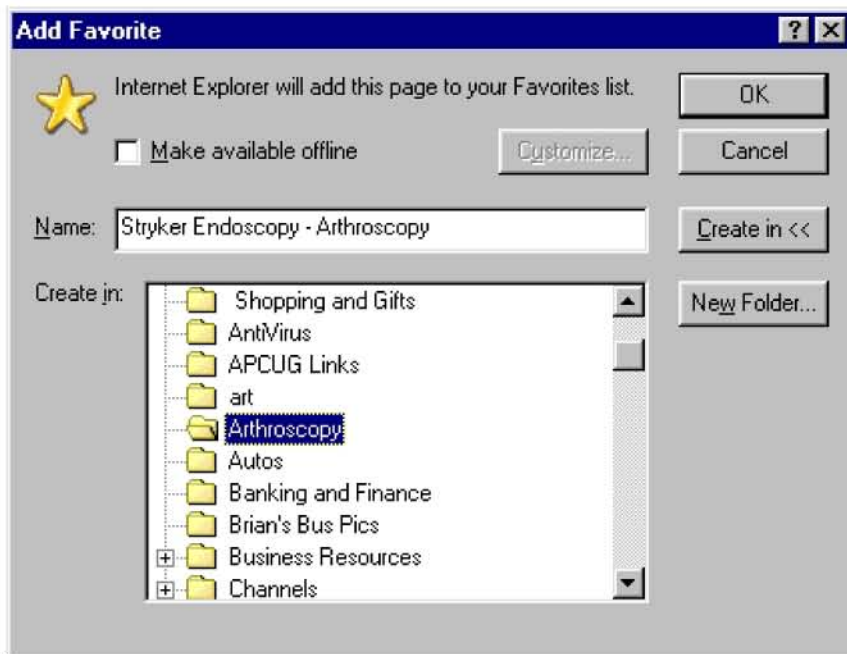
Having found a site of interest, I decide to add it to my list of favorites. With the site open in Internet Explorer, I click on the Add icon. The window at



process of researching some special area, it only makes sense to save any favorites I come across in a folder devoted to that area of interest. If a folder doesn't already exist, the first thing you want to do is create one. When you click on the add icon, the window above opens. In order to place the item in a specific location, you click the Create in button on the lower right. This will open another window, the right portion

the top of the column on the next page opens. You should note that the Name has already been entered. At this point I scroll the list to the Arthroscopy folder and select (highlight) it. Now I click the Create in button and then OK. This item has been added to my Favorites list in the Arthroscopy folder.

Now comes the interesting part, for which I have no explanation. If I close the page of interest and move on

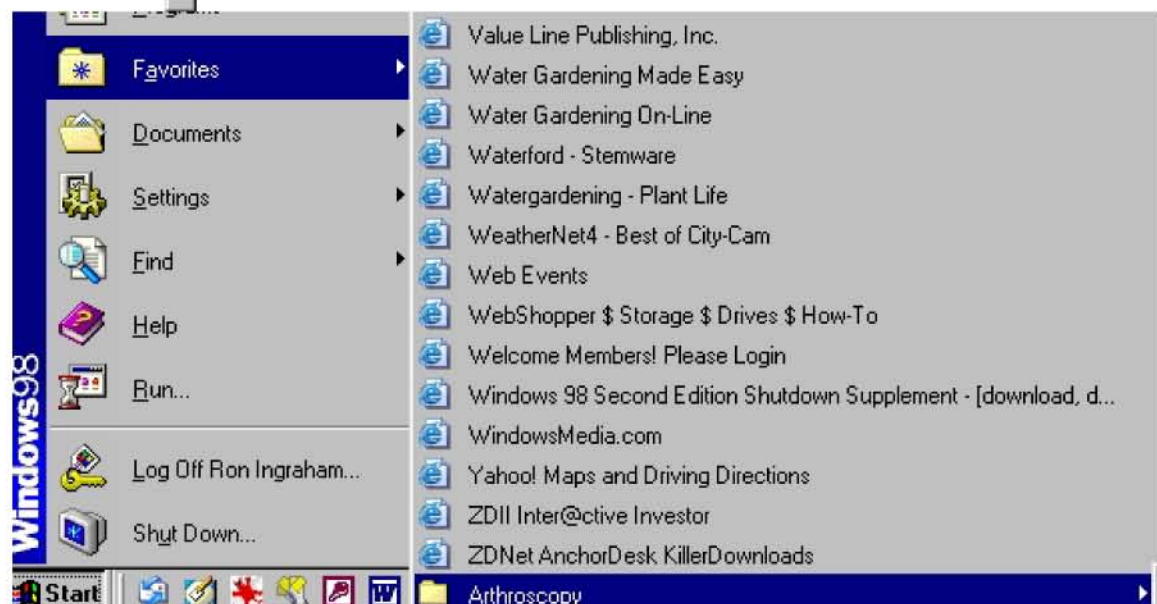


to another site, and then decide that I want to return to the Stryker site, the Arthroscopy folder does not appear alphabetically with the rest of the folders when I click on Favorites. Experience tells me to look at the extreme bottom of the list. Sure enough, that's where it

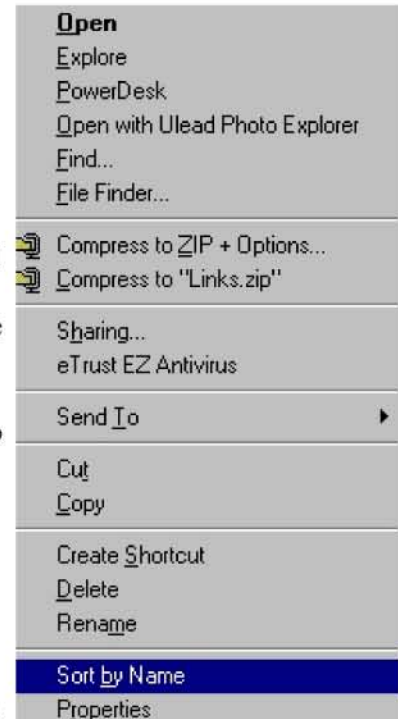


appears. Now the question is, how do I get it to appear with the rest of the folders? You may left click it and drag it to the desired location. The trick here is to wait until a horizontal

line appears just below the desired location, in this case, Art. Then release the mouse button. If you don't get the line, the folder will become a subfolder in whatever location you dropped it.



There are two easier ways around the problem. If your new folder is at the bottom of the list, the quickest way to put it in the proper location is to go **Start, Favorites** and when the list appears, right click in an empty area. (See the window at the bottom of the page). This will produce the menu seen below. If you click on Sort by name, the new folder or any other files out of alphabetical order will be



sorted correctly.

An even quicker way achieve this is to use the Favorites drop-down menu from the menu line. The list of favorites will appear immediately and from there the process is the same. Right click the open area and select Sort by Name.

Next month we'll look at using the Media icon. □

HandiApped Independence: Part 3

By Frank Petrie, Freelance writer, Macsimum News contributor, Curmudgeon

GUEST CONTRIBUTOR

(This is part three of a continuing series to help disabled geeks and everyday surfers set up their computers, give advice on where to set up their computers and what products could be most beneficial to them.)

Your first assignment was to keep a diary of your habits and routines, and make notes as to where you spend most of your time, where your paths intersect most and such. This determines the best place to place your computer. Your second assignment was to take measurements of your room. make a list of what furniture and equipment you need to accomplish this. This doesn't necessarily mean purchasing new materials, but possibly tweaking current things that you own.

Now, in part three I'm going to throw a wrench into everything that you've worked so hard on thus far. How are you going to connect to the Internet? By phone line? By cable modem? And will you want to use a router, or possibly, go wireless? Are you networking? Let's first look at the various types of connections, in case you're not familiar with the various choices.

Dial-Up: Using a standard phone line, you can connect to the internet, albeit the slowest way possible. Pro: Inexpensive. Con: You get what you pay for.

DSL: Uses your existing phone line (if this service is available in your area; check with your carrier). Pro: Faster speeds and you can make calls on the same line simultaneously. Con: You pay for what you get.

Cable modem Regardless of all the hype, this is still the fastest way for the home consumer to connect to the internet. Main drawback is that it is basically a trunk line. In other words, the more people that are simultaneously using the same neighborhood node that you are, the slower your performance will be. Pro: Fast, fast, fast. Con: Pricey, pricey, pricey.

(BTW, if you're wondering about T1 and T3 lines, just wonder. You can't afford it.)

Now, this may force you to tweak your layout's location. If you have more than one computer, you're going to most likely be networking. If you're going 'hardwire,' then you will obviously need to be near a wall jack for your connection of choice, be it a phone jack or a modem jack. And if you like DIY projects, you could run cable around your baseboards. But it's hard to make that look classy. But I have seen it done by those who are pretty handy.

Your other option is to buy a wireless router to hook up to your modem. Only the router has to remain near the jack. If your computer doesn't have a card or antennae to receive the router's signal, then you'll have to purchase those. With this set up, you can pretty much put your workstation exactly where you please. (Unless you live in a mansion, in which case you have no need to read this series at all).

The only drawback to wireless is that it does slow your signal down a tad because wireless is not efficient as hardwire, but it's not a deal breaker. With wireless you can place your computer anywhere within your transmitter's broadcast range. This does require extra hardware, however. You're going to need a base station (which is usually built within most routers) and a receiver for each computer that you want to use wirelessly. (BTW, I forgot to mention that if you want to hardwire several computers together, you'll also need a router but one without a base station.)

Now that you have all this information, look closely at what you have designed. Do you have the necessary jacks nearby or are they located somewhere on the other side of the room? Or maybe in the next room? This will help you decide whether to go wireless or not. Or maybe your medical bills have already dictated that decision for you. Either way, you can now start searching for what equipment you need and where you can get it cheapest.

Once you have a list of the brand hardware that you think that you want, go onto Apple's discussion boards. Go to hardware and pick your computer. Search under your machine's listing with the brand name of your desired hardware or something vague like 'router.' You'll probably get a few hits and read whether others have had negative or positive experiences with your chosen equipment. Do the same with the OS that you're running to see if there are any software issues or conflicts. If the responses are overly negative, start looking at other choices.

Now we part with our money. First, with all this information at hand, ask a friend to drop by and show them what you have planned. If you've overlooked anything, they'll point it out to you. (Sort of a 'measure twice, cut once.')

Now, let's shop. Check the ads in your computer magazines (and I don't mean just the full color ones dispersed throughout the magazine, also look at the smaller ads in the back.) Check out their sites. Do they seem reputable? Do you trust them? On the web, always check CompUSA's, Buy.com's and Circuit City's sites. They have deals that are sometimes internet only. Plus the occasional rebate!

Look at places like The Mug Center's Vendor Offers page, if you belong to a user group. Lots of companies provide discounts for user groups. You never know what you might find. Check the classifieds in user group newsletters and bulletin boards.

If you have a free Saturday and are mobile, also check yard sales, flea markets and computer fairs. Check the merchandise carefully, but you can sometimes find gems in all that rubbish for a fraction of their original cost.

If you're only shopping online, now go to Price Grabber.com with your final choices. In my experience, they select from the widest range of dealers for their prices for your item of choice. You'll find people that you have never heard of and some of the more recognizable names. Found a price that you like? Now read the reviews of that vendor. It's not unusual, that the least expensive price may not be the best buy. You may want to deal with your second vendor of choice, even if he is a bit more pricey.

Don't be a loser at the rebate game

Jim Sanders, Editor, North Orange County Computer Club <editor@noccc.org>

Most of us have bought something that sounded like a great value — “After Rebate or Rebates.” Everywhere from a great price to FREE! Most are legitimate. Most require a fair amount of work to claim. Most are never claimed. Most say you will have to wait 6 to 10 weeks for a check (for some that turns into 6 to 10 months). Many have tricky fine print. A few are outright scams!

Below are a list of things that you should do, as opposed to just think about, if your going to buy an item with a rebate and have any real intention of claiming the rebate and actually getting it. Following that are three emails that dealt with a denied rebate claim for our new President Elise Edgell.

If you are going to buy an item with a rebate, while you are at the checkout stand, **NOT AFTER YOU GET HOME**, do the following:

- Write down the sales clerk's name then ask him to show you that you have all the items needed to claim the rebate. Ask him to put an X on the correct UPC barcode.
- Make sure you have a copy of the correct rebate form(s). Some are inside the box. You just paid for the item, it is yours, open the box and read the terms.
- If it is an upgrade rebate, it is better to find out if your old product qualifies **BEFORE you go to the store**. Check the vendor's website, call the store and ask!

READ THE FINE PRINT! THEN READ IT AGAIN!

- Read the “Proof of Purchase” requirement list.
- Does it require the original “Sales Receipt” or is a copy OK. If the original is required, ask the store for a duplicate original that is acceptable for a product exchange if there is a problem with the product. Some stores provide a “Rebate Receipt.” Make sure that matches the requirement list.
- Check the postmark requirement, I have seen one that gave you only three days to get it postmarked. Don't wait till the last day to mail it.
- Make sure a website address and/or telephone number is included that you can use to contact the rebate center about your rebate. Most of the upscale rebate centers include an 800 number.
- Make two copies of ALL documentation submitted. If a cheesy rebate center decides to tell you they never received your request, without copies, you're up the proverbial creek. I am working on an article about using your scanner for this purpose.
- I think it is a good idea to include one of the documentation photocopies with the submission to make the point that you have copies. Mark it “CC: Vendor, My Files.” On the larger rebates, buying the \$0.95 proof of delivery service at the post office is cheap insurance. Having a witness to the mailing doesn't hurt. Error on your side of the game. If it says 6 to 8 weeks, check at 6 weeks, don't wait three months. Be reasonable with phone calls but check the website as often as you like. Mark your calendar to remind yourself to

check on the rebate. Keep a folder for all of your rebates. Move completed ones to another folder. Once you get your rebate check, read how long it is good for. Some are good for 6 months. Most are void after 60 days. A few are void after 30 days. I got one that was expired when it was delivered. When you think you have been shafted, don't just grimace and bear it, complain. Complain to the retailer. Complain to the vendor. If all else fails, file a complaint with the FTC at www.ftc.gov. You can also file a complaint with the Better Business Bureau at www.bbb.org. Taking the retailer to Small Claims Court is an option.

The email exchange with BFG Technologies, Inc.:

Dear Sir, My name is Jim Sanders, and I am the editor of the North Orange County Computer Club's newsletter, the Orange Bytes. PDF copies of the publication are available at <http://www.noccc.org>. For several weeks I have been gathering material for an article on the rebate games. Our members should see it in the next issue of the newsletter. This is a hot issue with our members as a number have been burned by various rebate offers. In a lot of cases it was due to not reading the fine print, not crossing all T's or dotting all I's, a claim that the request was never received or not received in time.

In some instances the rebate was a pure scam. A few refused rebates may be caused by human error on the part of the highly trained, intelligent, well paid staff of the rebate center. A common reason given for a rebate denial is that a required piece of documentation was not included.

All too often, that claim cannot be refuted as the original was sent in and the suggestion to photocopy all submitted documentation was not followed because of the hassle involved. In an interesting coincidence of timing, our club President, Elise Edgell, showed me the rebate denial post card that she received on 7/16/2005. The reason given for the refusal: “We did not receive a sales receipt with your request.” She purchased a BFG GeForce FX 5500 OC at a special Fry's Electronics' one day sale where a \$50 rebate was offered on your product. In this case, Elise did scan all the documentation sent in with the rebate and kept it as a JPG file. In addition, the original documentation was stapled to a printout of that file and a notation was hand printed on that sheet, in bold marker pen: “CC: Vendor, My Files.” That file is attached to this email. As both of us bought the product and requested the rebate in the same way, it will be interesting to see if I get the same post card.

I understand that you contract the rebate function to other companies, but the typical club member that has a problem thinks the problem is with the company that made the product and offered the rebate. It is your reputation that suffers, not the rebate center.

Would you express your opinion on which of the above reasons might be the cause of this rebate being denied?

Sincerely,

Jim Sanders, Editor, NOCCC Orange Bytes

Hi Jim,

Thanks for contacting BFG Technologies, and thanks for giving us the opportunity to clarify this particular rebate situation.

Looking at the picture in your attachment of Elise's submission, it appears there is not a copy of her "Sales Receipt" included along with the other required items.

In addition to the "Rebate Form/Receipt" and the "Proof of Purchase" cut from the box, a copy of the "Sales Receipt" is required. With Fry's it can sometimes be confusing because they label the Rebate Form as a "Rebate Receipt". This could lead a customer into thinking that the form was both the rebate form AND the sales receipt, although they are actually two separate items.

Some additional information that may be of interest; this is one of two rebates that have the highest redemption rates we have ever run. This indicates to us that majority of customers are including all the correct documentation and getting the rebate for this particular program.

In this particular case, the rebate house did refuse the rebate on proper grounds. However, we will contact the rebate house and approve Elise's rebate, and yours as well. We often do that for customers who contact us and believe that that they were denied incorrectly. We look into individual cases and make approvals where the facts support it.

Thanks again for giving us the opportunity to respond. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact us.

Kind regards, John @ BFG

Hi John,

Thank you for your quick response and also for fixing the problem.

In an effort to resolve why it became a problem in the first place, I made a trip to the Anaheim Fry's Electronics store. I asked to speak to the person in charge of dealing with rebates. The woman that responded to that request was pleasant enough, but not very helpful. I asked why Fry's was having their checkout clerks tell customers that the "Rebate Receipt" is the same as the full sales receipt for rebate purposes. Her response was:

"Well, sometimes it is and sometimes it's not." The discussion lasted several minutes. It bogged down into questions of semantics, perception, lack of explicit wording, and responsibility. Her rebuttal to your assertion that it is a "Rebate Form/Receipt" was that if you cut that form in two just above the line "Rebate Form:" you have a "Receipt" and a "Rebate Form." That to help the customer by not having multiple, small, separate documents that are more easily lost, or difficult to match up with the appropriate rebate form, they are printed together. That the "Proof of purchase requirements:" Section 3, says "a copy of your receipt," not "Sales Receipt," not "Full Sales Receipt," not "Rebate Receipt," just "Receipt." That obviously the "Re-

bate Receipt" is a receipt. I commented that the Fry's IT department controlled what is printed and how it is printed. That it would be trivial for them to better separate the two forms with a couple of extra blank lines, a line of asterisks, and a line that says "Cut here." That they could easily have changed Section 3 to explicitly state what kind of "Receipt" was required. That if printing the "Rebate Receipt" is supposed to be a courtesy to the customer, it would be trivial to have the computer print out a "Duplicate Sales Receipt" when that was required by the vendor. That if Fry's is going to the effort to provide this courtesy service at all, they should go the extra step, and endeavor to do it correctly, rather than in the current, confusing, fashion. I commented that Fry's apparently feels it is their responsibility to remind customers that they should make a copy of all documentation submitted for a rebate by handing out a yellow sheet with that warning, why not expand it to include a caution about the receipt problem.

Her response was in essence, I don't have any control over what the IT department does. I counted to ten, thanked her for her time and left. I hope this feedback helps you with future programs.

Sincerely,

Jim Sanders Editor, NOCCC Orange Bytes

On 7-23-05 we put on our best optimistic face and went to the <http://www.rebatestatus.com> website to see how well the rebate had been approved. We were hoping to see a message like: "The check is in the mail," and lo and behold we did.

Pony Express or 4th Class, but in the mail.

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Now Accepting  

Alamo PC Presents the 2005 Open House Celebration

Fun, Friends, and Food

The Alamo PC Open House & Volunteer Recognition Event

By Linda Bianchi, Chair, Volunteer Recognition Committee
Photos by Mike Bianchi



November 20th was the day chosen to help celebrate the season with an Open House at the Computer Learning Center and to thank our wonderful volunteers.

Members of the Volunteer Recognition Committee provided decor. A video presentation showcasing Alamo PC volunteers, along with some humor, was put together by Cary Hall and ran throughout the event. Alamo PC members brought in lots of terrific goodies from spiced nuts, to cookies and cake, to pizza, meat rolls, and cheese trays. We presented Awards for Volunteer Service, door prizes were handed out, and fun was had by all.



A wonderful centerpiece garnishes a table at the Volunteer Recognition Event (above). Snacks and sweets were served to all who attended (left). Fall decorations adorned the Learning Center (far left, top).

The event also corresponded with National Family Volunteer Week, which celebrates families working together in service to the community and encourages those who haven't yet made the commitment to volunteer as a family.

Alamo PC is fortunate to have several groups of family members who work as a team volunteering at Alamo PC. The current groups include:

Cliff and Emma Overfelt
Cary and Jean Hall
Mike and Linda Bianchi
Joe and Bridgette Brazell
Audrey and Ed Henkin
Don and Linda Robinson
William Hudson and Sharon Issacs

Past groups where both partners were active and at least one partner is still active with the encouragement of the other include:

Steve and Kelli Arvin
Susan and John Ives
Clarke and Marion Bird
Joe and Marion Barth
Robin and Bill Johnson
Karl and Rose Lynn Saenger

The Volunteer Service Awards are normally presented each year, but due to some unfortunate circumstances, the awards for 2004 were not passed out during that year. This year we had the honor of remedying that situation in addition to recognizing the 2005 Award recipients. Please be sure to thank any of these volunteers the next time you see them at an Alamo PC event.

The Volunteer Of The Month award is a monthly award given to the person who best exemplifies the volunteer spirit of the Organization during that month.

Each of these volunteers has their name and the month engraved on a metal plate, which is then added to a plaque displaying the entire year. The Volunteer of the Month plaques can be seen at the Computer Learning Center. Photos may also appear on the bulletin board at the Computer Learning Center, in the PC Alamode, and on the web site.

Volunteers Of The Month For 2004

January - **Mike Bianchi**
February - **Becky Bigalow**
March - **Richard Black**
April - **Bruce Cramer**
May - **Bill Eastridge**
June - **Mike Favor**
July - **Kelli Arvin**
August - **Bob Goad**
September - **Beverly Bihn**
October - **Robin Johnson**
November - **William Hudson**
December - **Forrest Melton**

Volunteers Of The Month For 2005

January - **Paul Sanche**
February - **Christel Villarreal**
March - **Joe Brazell**
April - **Veline Fairburn**
May - **Billy Samples**
June - **Gwen Langland**
July - **Barbara Whaley**
August - **Clarke Bird**
September - **Lois Trull**
October - **Gene Uptain**
November - **Don Robinson**
December - **Ed Henkin**

The Member of the Year Awards for 2004 and 2005 went to two wonderful and hardworking volunteers.

The Member Of The Year award description is:

An annual award given to that member who has best exhibited service to the organization above and beyond the normal level of contribution; a person who has made a definite and definable contribution to the attainment of the mission of the organization.

Each person receives their own plaque to keep and their name is added to a special plaque displayed at the Computer Learning Center.

Member Of the Year 2004

Beverly Bihn



Beverly Bihn receives the Member Of The Year 2004 Plaque.

Member Of The Year 2005

Billy Samples

Additionally a large list of dedicated volunteers received Meritorious Service Award Pins. These recognitions are lapel pins in the shape of a computer with the Alamo PC logo showing on the screen. The pins are presented to Volunteers who have served continuously for five or more years with the Organization. The names of these deserving folks can be found on the Alamo PC web site in the awards section under the About Us tab.

The Meritorious Service Award an annual award given to volunteers who have steadfastly worked for the benefit of the organization for a minimum of five years. On each anniversary of the original award, the recipients would receive an additional recognition. This award would be given to all that qualify as their names are submitted through the committee.

A special Thank You is extended to a "superhero" couple, Jean and Cary Hall for all of their help with the event. Thank you also to John Northrup and Steve Tech for their clean-up help.



Billy Samples receives the Member Of The Year 2005 Plaque.

*Open House
Celebration*

Thank you to the following who generously provided food for the event:

Cary and Jean Hall, Jennifer Hall, Oscar Peterson, William Hudson and Sharon Issacks, Joe Speier, Bruce Cramer, Mary Northrup, Marge Fraley, Oscar Lozano, Billy Samples, Mary Tello, Cliff and Emma Overfelt, Tim and Judy Turner, Steve Tech, Gwen Langland, Linda Bianchi, Terry King, Beverly Bihn, and drinks provided by Alamo PC.

*Open House
Celebration*

Some Great Alamo PC Couples



Cary and Jean Hall

*Open House
Celebration*



Audrey and Ed Henkin



Jeanette and Bruce McAlexander



Open House Celebration

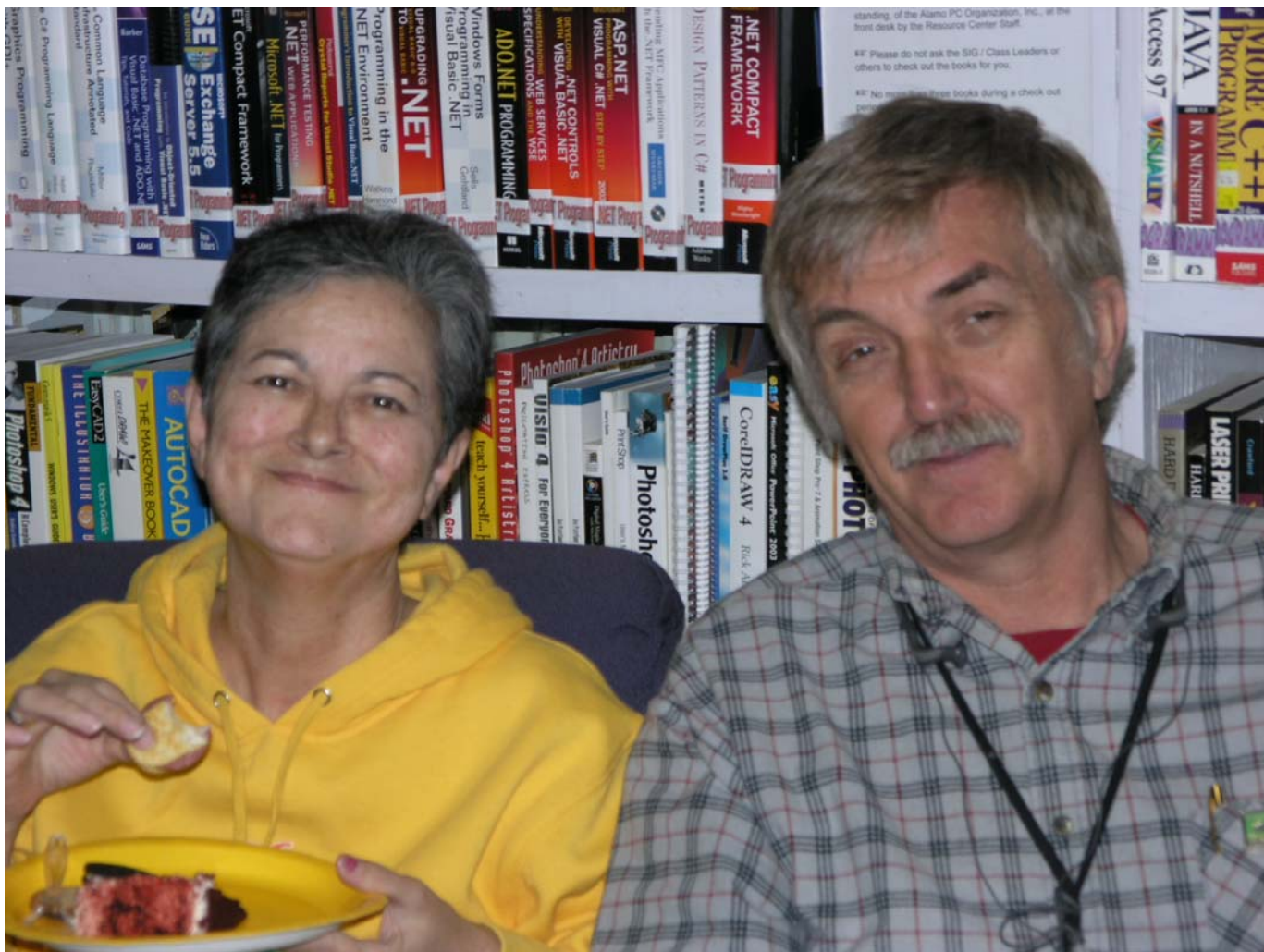


Joe and Nancy Speier



Joe and Anne Fazzino

Open House Celebration



Maki and Steve Tech



Sandra and Bob Goad

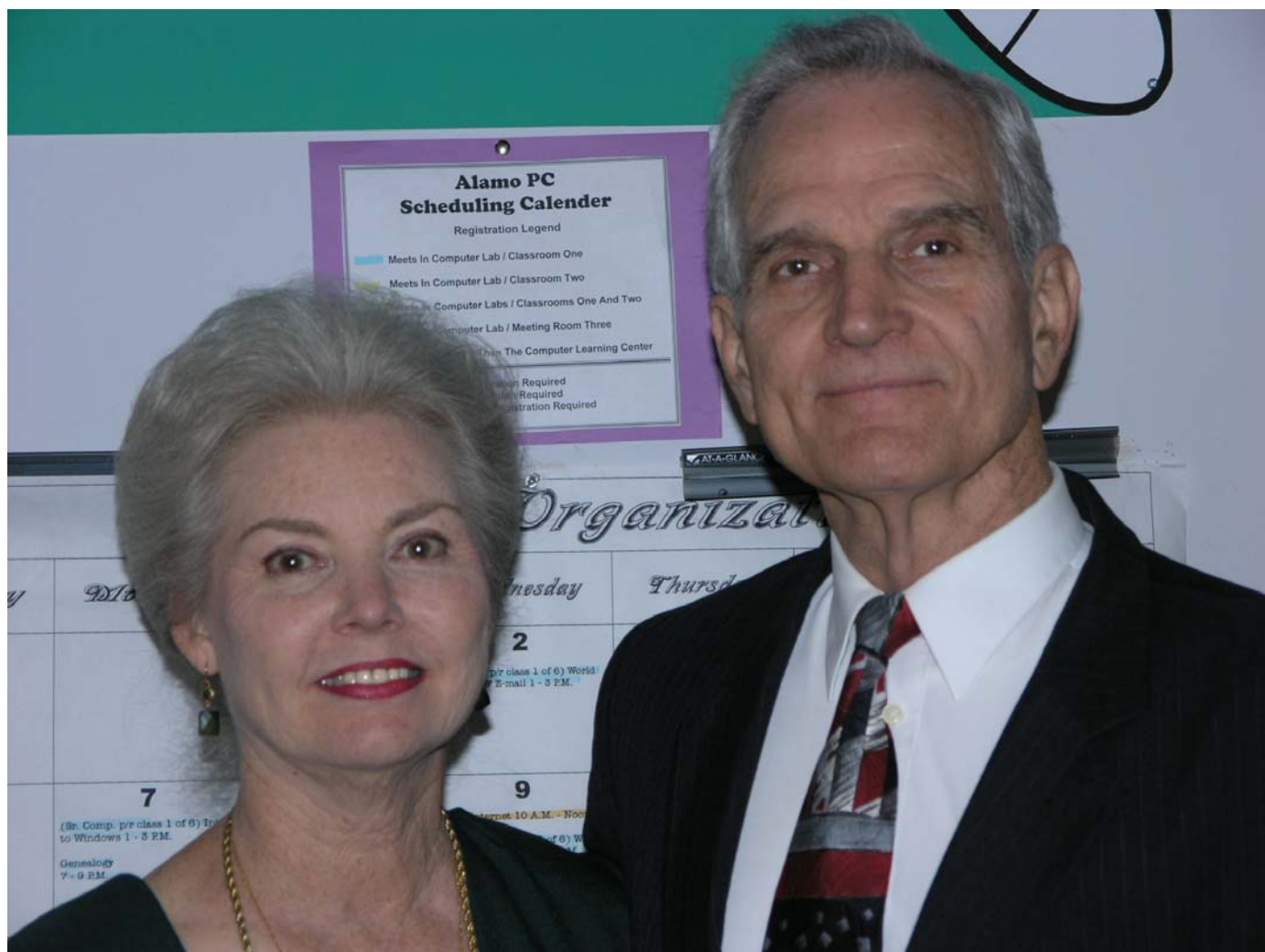
Open House Celebration



Rose Lynn and Karl Saenger



Several members gather in the seating area of the Media Center of the Learning Center.



Mary and Bill Klutz

*Open House
Celebration*



Beverly Bihn talks to a participant at the Volunteer Recognition celebration.



The DuVal's

Open House Celebration



William Hudson and Sharon Issacks



STUDY GROUPS

Call the Learning Center for schedule information 736-0700 or see page 59-63.



A wall of Alamo PC members enjoys the festivities.

Tips and tools for computing in the New Year



Buying a PC for the New Year

By Vinnie Labash, Sarasota PCUG, Florida <labash@spcug.org>

Don't buy a low end PC this year if you have any plans of moving to Microsoft's new Vista operating system. If you're sticking with XP, almost anything will do, even video that's integrated with the motherboard.

Vista is not due for almost a year, but a little forethought before buying will prevent much regret in 2006. I say this because if Microsoft keeps only half its promises about new features and improved security in Vista, most of its customers will want to make the move to the new operating system.

If your computer's specifications are too weak or only marginally acceptable to Vista, you will either not be able to upgrade or wish you hadn't tried.

Let's start with the processor. You don't need top-of-the-line CPU, but don't buy anything that's less than mid-range. Either Intel or AMD will do, and you should probably go for a dual-core processor for added speed and processing muscle. By the time Vista is on the scene, a lot more 64 bit software may be on hand. A 64 bit processor makes good sense since it can also handle today's 32 bit programs.

Microsoft appears likely to make 512MB of RAM its minimum requirement. Never settle for minimum requirements with memory. I'm sure you could fly cross-country in a two seat one engine monoplane, but your flight would be much more comfortable if you were sipping your favorite beverage while lounging in a high powered commercial passenger jet. Memory is cheap. Buy at least one gigabyte of memory, two if you decide on a 64 bit processor.

Only masochists should buy a machine with video that's integrated with chips on the motherboard. Integrated video shares your processor memory with your applications and often results in poor performance. Buy the cheapest video card that has at least 256MB of on-board RAM. You will be happy.

You will need a fast DVD drive that is capable of recording multiple formats. This is an ideal storage medium for backups. Get two. They're not prohibitively expensive any more.

More and more people have digital cameras, picture-phones, music players, video-cams, and other peripherals which attach to computers in one fashion or another. Look for a machine

with at least six USB 2.0 connectors. It doesn't hurt to have one IEEE 1394, or Firewire connector.

You owe it to yourself to have a 17" or larger flat panel monitor. Don't tell me you can't afford it. Dell makes a 23" outstanding flat panel device for less than \$1,000. Even good 19" monitors can be had for \$450 or less.

Hard disk space has never been cheaper. Dual 250GB hard drives need not be an extravagance this holiday season if you want the space for music and video files. Optionally, install RAID 1 for disk mirroring and instant automatic backup. If one hard drive is enough, an external USB 2.0 connected hard drive is an excellent backup device.

Audiophiles can consult Creative Labs and drool over X-Fi Elite Pro. Then spring for good speakers with a subwoofer. The rest of us can be content with audio chips integrated with the motherboard.

Media center PCs come with remote control devices and a TV tuner. They are meant to be operated from a distance to play music, present slide shows, view photos, and watch TV. Don't buy the cheapest machines because they leave out a lot of important features.

Most salespeople are paid on a combination of salary, commissions, and bonuses for selling specific makes and models. Know what you are looking for before visiting a showroom, and don't let a sales person talk you into more or less machine than you want. It's a very good idea to come to your next PC User Group meeting and get the best advice from all the friendly people you will meet there. Many of them will help you configure your new machine.

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Computer In A Smart House

Linda Soloski, Greater Tampa Bay PC User Group

I got this from a friend who just moved to North Carolina. Her husband is being deployed to Iraq.

Hello, everyone! It is so good to return to the land of the living. We've had quite an adjustment getting ourselves here to North Carolina, electronically speaking.

The saga began in Brandon [Florida], when — for some unknown reason — Verizon decided to disconnect our service four days early. Repeated attempts to get back online failed, as did numerous attempts to retrieve all my lost email correspondences (which I had not yet saved) and all of my email contacts.

Charlotte, my DAR friend, actually located your address on a scrap slip of paper stuck between the kid's medical record and the telephone book!

So, please, if you have a mass email from me with numerous addresses, forward it to this new address, as I am trying to compile a list from scratch. Did I mention that no one at Verizon seemed to know that one could actually store email addresses in their "Address" box? Interesting.

Finally, with much ado and nothing to show for it, we get to North Carolina. We bought our house in a nice little rural neighborhood with quiet streets, so quiet in fact, that apparently the cable company had no idea we existed.

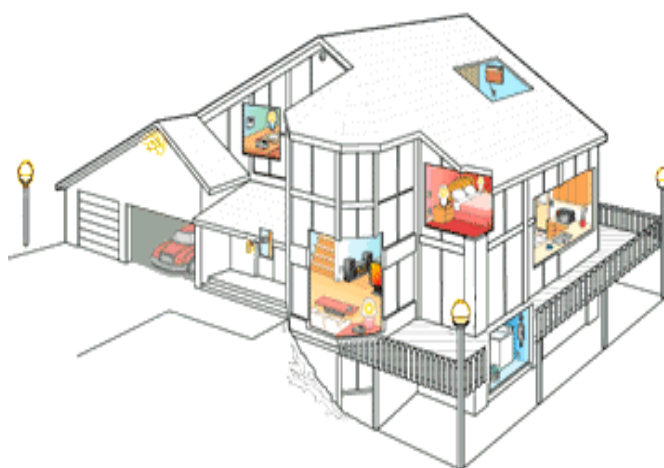
For three weeks, I called back and forth trying to get someone to acknowledge that we are here and we do indeed exist. On the third week without internet access, I have completed my 12-step compulsive-computer-user-withdrawal program and the pangs have started to subside when the cable guy stops by to say we do, indeed, exist and our lines, as I've repeatedly shouted, are running all through the house.

Did I mention we purchased a "smart" house? Yep. It's so sophisticated that you can turn electronics on from any phone or internet extension anywhere in the world. (Too bad we can't get internet, huh?) The entire house is hard-wired with wireless internet, surround sound, security systems, the works!

Then we move to step two.

The "other" cable (not the one that says you exist, a different one) has to come by and actually stick the cables together and connect them to their box.

Another nine days go by and the drool and shaky hands are back. It's so hard to be addicted to technology. I'm telling you, the guy seemed to have a glow all around when he approached the door and I thought I heard the faint sound of harps playing.



Now I wish I could say I'm exaggerating, but seven hours, yeah, SEVEN HOURS later, he still can't get the lines hooked up. Apparently our "smart" house is smarter than our cable guy.

He leaves, then returns, then calls the home office, then another cable guy. At 7 p.m., my husband comes home and dismisses the guy in lieu of going to dinner and asks him to come back the next day.

"Sure" the guy says. Of course, the next day, no one shows. After several calls we're told only the home office can schedule and the next available slot is five days from now. A familiar pang hits my gut like an alcoholic at a night club.

We press on and five days later, not one, not two, but THREE cable guys show up. In 15 minutes, we're up and running. Internet, email, the works! HALLELUJAH!

So you think now we are we up and running? Nah. Once again, our "Smart" house has outsmarted us. Our 21st century top-of-the-line electronic package left us without a connection in the dog-gone office! ('Cause no one wants a computer in the office, right?)

I'm off to Best Buy for a wireless router to network with our smart house. Installation, as is always the case, was a blast! I never realized I had a drinking problem.

That night, before I've had a chance to surf even the first Website, we have a terrible electrical storm. No problem, we've got the monster surge protector, we'll be fine.

You guessed it! No power.

The next day, no computer, either. I wish I could say I am joking. Two trips to Best Buy's "Geek Squad" and I'm told I have no — let me repeat that — NO HARD DRIVE. They try rescuing it, but, as is par for this course, there is just no saving it. I take a week off to lick my wounds and try to heal then run out and buy a new laptop.

Now I have a nice new computer that is completely useless until I fill it up with all of the software I lost. Did I mention I HATE electronics? I've lost all my family tree stuff, all my World War

II information, all the stuff on book publishers for the family history, the Daughters of the American Revolution stuff, everything. I would appreciate anything that any of you may have that could help me rebuild. And yes, I'm putting it all on CD this time so as not to lose it.

As for my internet days, I'd like to say I'm cured. But like a bad addiction, I find myself inexplicably drawn to the blue-gray glow of the computer screen and the hum of a hard drive kicking in is like the melodic sirens off the coast of tiny islands, drawing unsuspecting sailors toward their doom.

At least for that brief period, when everything works according to plan, I may be able to reach that euphoric nirvana of a captain sinking with his ship, knowing he's going down doing what he loves.

News Brief

E-mail from Bonnie Speedy, National Director, AARP Tax-Aide

IRS Warns of e-Mail Scam about Tax Refunds

WASHINGTON - The Internal Revenue Service today issued a consumer alert about an Internet scam in which consumers receive an e-mail informing them of a tax refund. The e-mail, which claims to be from the IRS, directs the consumer to a link that requests personal information, such as Social Security number and credit card information.

This scheme is an attempt to trick the e-mail recipients into disclosing their personal and financial data. The practice is called "phishing" for information.

The information fraudulently obtained is then used to steal the taxpayer's identity and financial assets. Generally, identity thieves use someone's personal data to steal his or her financial accounts, run up charges on the victim's existing credit cards, apply for new loans, credit cards, services or benefits in the victim's name and even file fraudulent tax returns.

The bogus e-mail, which claims to come from "tax refunds@irs.gov," tells the recipient that he or she is eligible to receive a tax refund for a given amount. It then says that, to access a form for the tax refund, the recipient must use a link contained in the e-mail. The link then asks for the personal and financial information.

The IRS does not ask for personal identifying or financial information via unsolicited e-mail. Additionally, taxpayers do not have to complete a special form to obtain a refund.

If you receive an unsolicited e-mail purporting to be from the IRS, take the following steps:

- Do not open any attachments to the e-mail, in case they contain malicious code that will infect your computer.
- Contact the IRS at 1-800-829-1040 to determine whether the IRS is trying to contact you about a tax refund.

The IRS has seen numerous attempts over the years to defraud the public and the federal government through a variety of schemes, including abusive tax avoidance transactions, identity theft, claims for slavery reparations, frivolous arguments and more. More information on these schemes may be found on the criminal enforcement page at IRS.gov.



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Digital Cameras Blossom as Popularity Increases

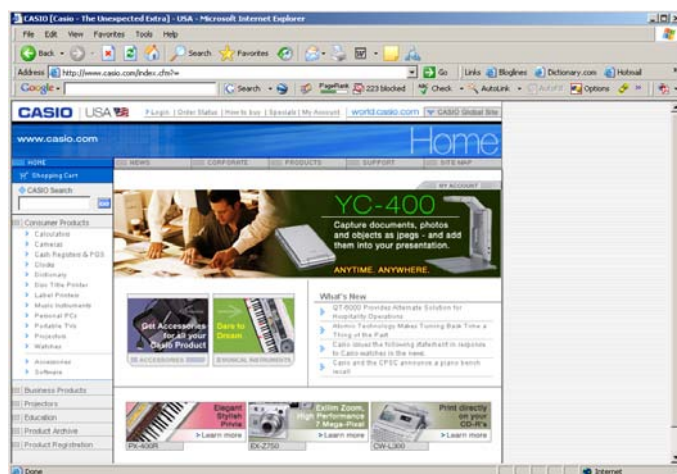
By Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, TX; radio & TV show host

Much to no one's surprise, the popularity of digital cameras is exploding, as the quality improves even more, and the cameras become more affordable. Digital photography, which was initially slow, grainy, and sometimes difficult to manipulate has matured, and is now nearly universal. With the dramatic improvements in digital camera and storage technology in recent years, much of what early adopters of digital photography experienced has changed for the better.

Sitting in front of me as I type this column are two digital cameras, each of which are representative of the respective technology of the day. One of the cameras is a JVC GC-S1U which is about 5 years old, and when it was new it was considered a technological marvel and state of the art in its day, but by today's standards, while still functional, is technologically obsolete. One of the first digital still cameras available, it has a .3 (that is 3/10) of a megapixel image of 640x480 pixels, which is miniscule by today's standards. It takes 4 AA batteries, which are good for only a few dozen photos before they are exhausted, even less if the integral flash is used. Reviews of the day used the expression that this camera "eats batteries". One of the first cameras on the market to take a memory card, it uses the now large format by current standards CF or Compact Flash card for additional photo storage. Connecting to the computer via a very slow serial connection made photos slow to download, unless an external card reader was used to read the CF card. One feature that this antique camera has, that is still impressive by today's standards is a 10x optical zoom. The processor in the camera is horribly slow by today's standards, with a noticeable lag between pressing the shutter and capturing the image, along with a long delay for a follow up snapshot.

The newer digital cameras on the market clearly show the technological improvements that have become commonplace. New digital cameras come in a wide assortment of prices and features, from tiny key-chain size cameras, to cameras embedded in a ballpoint pen, to inexpensive disposable cameras to pocket size marvels, to SLR (Single Lens Reflex) type cameras with extreme resolution rivaling 35mm film, and using an assortment of available lenses, just like traditional 35mm cameras. Zoom can range from the less expensive and generally inferior digital zoom, to the superior optical zoom. Zoom ranges typically range from 3x to 12x, with some models offering a combination of optical and digital zoom to increase the ability to manipulate the closeness of the image. Many of the newer digital still cameras can also capture video and sound, often in the popular MPEG-4 30fps (30 frames per second) format, the length of the video being only limited by the amount of storage available on the memory card.

The second camera I have in front of me is a new, state of the art Casio EX-S500, one of a series of new cameras Casio is



producing in the "Exilim" series. The camera is actually small compared to my older camera, only being about 3.5 inches wide, by about 2.3 inches tall, and about .6 (6/10) of an inch thick, weighing only about 4 ounces. This full featured camera will easily fit in a shirt pocket or purse. It uses the tiny SD memory cards. With an excellent 5 megapixel maximum image size, this camera will take digital photos in six different sizes ranging from an enormous 2560x1920 pixel size (5 megapixels), to the smaller 640x480 size (3/10 of a megapixel). It should be noted that the smaller the image, the more images that can be stored in the memory card. Also, the smaller images are more appropriate if they are going to be emailed, an important consideration in "netiquette". The larger size images are appropriate if large photos are to be printed in 8x10 inch or 11x14 inch sizes, or even larger.

Zoom is provided by a telescoping 3x optical zoom, which can be coupled with an integral 4x digital zoom, giving a maximum zoom of 12x. The lens produced very bright and sharp images. When the camera is turned off, the telescoping zoom lens is retracted into the body of the camera, making the front of the camera nearly flat. One technological marvel built into this camera an "Anti-Shake DSP" which is a digital signal processor that removes the effect of moving the camera while the image is being recorded; this contributes to an exceptionally

sharp image by removing or minimizing the blurring many of us encounter when we move the camera as we take a photo.

Despite the small stature of the camera, it also can record movies and sound in three formats, 640x480 in both high quality and normal mode, and a smaller image 320x240 size for extended play. Video is saved in MPEG-4 format, and the sound is saved in the universal WAV format. With a common and inexpensive 256 megabyte memory card, the camera can capture about 8 minutes of video and sound at the high quality setting, and about 45 minutes at the extended play setting. Simply, available memory and battery power is the limiting factor in the length of the video that can be shot at any given time.

While my old camera ate batteries, having a very short battery life, this new Casio Exilim has a proprietary rechargeable lithium ion battery with a normal capacity of about 200 photos before it needs to be recharged.

The camera has a shutter speed of 1/8 to 1/2000 of a second, rivaling many of the classical 35mm cameras, and includes a multi-mode flash, self timer, bright 2.2 inch LCD screen, and a mini-cradle which simultaneously connects the camera to a USB 2 high speed connection as well as AC power to charge the internal battery. There is also an "AV Out" jack on the cradle. Included with the camera are two CDs of software to download and manage the still images as well as the video. A set of included video cables allows the playing of video direct from the camera when it is docked in the cradle.

The body of the Casio Exilim EX-S500 camera is stainless steel, and available in a typical steel grey color, as well as white or orange toned stainless steel. This camera has a suggested retail price of \$350. Locally these cameras are available at Circuit City, CompUSA, Radio Shack, Target, Ritz Camera, Sharper Image, or online from Casio at <www.casio.com>.

Casio is now marketing some excellent quality digital cameras, and should be strongly considered when shopping for better quality and full featured digital cameras.

News Brief

eBay Rethinks Promotion

EBay and Intel have developed a "Rethink Initiative" which seeks to bring together public and private organizations to promote recycling and reuse of old PCs and consumer electronics products. The announcement comes days after the Electronic Waste Recycling Act of 2003 became active in California, requiring consumers to pay an Electronic Waste Recycling Fee for certain devices, including monitors and laptop computers. EBay president and chief executive officer Meg Whitman said. "I would love to try as an industry to come together with market-based solutions so we won't have to face federal and state regulation."



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Student Practice Lab - A specific time period for students taking Alamo PC Courses to use Computer Lab (Classroom One) to practice their class assignments. Students may also make up missed class days, if the instructor has provided the course material to the individual. Seating is limited and on a first come, first serve basis.

Pre-registration is required. Call (210) 736-0080, or (210) 736-0700

Indexing the Web: Spiders, Web Crawlers & Bots

By Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D., Sarasota PC Monitor, Sarasota FL PC Users Group, <www.spcug.org>

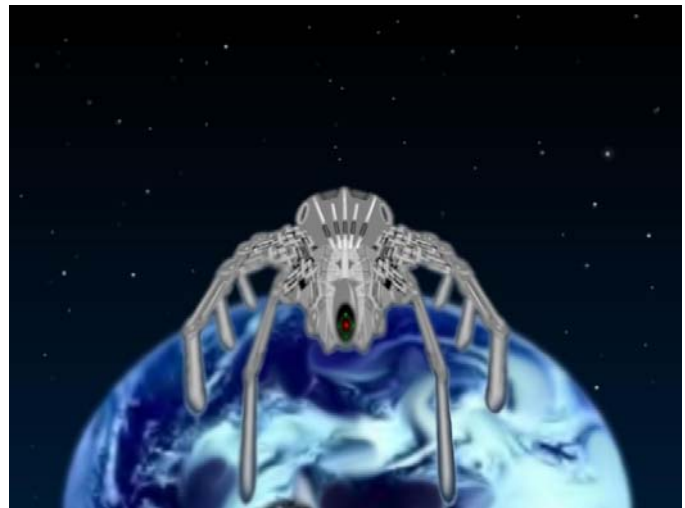
Have you ever wondered how search engines such as Google manage to get the answers to your queries so rapidly? How could they search the web that fast, I mean usually less than one second to find the words you ask for? Well --- They don't. Actually the searching goes on constantly, 24/7. And, the mechanism they use is just a modification of what you use for browsing the web.

Although you may have heard about spiders, web crawlers and web bots, they don't actually traverse the web any more than does your web browser (Internet Explorer or Firefox or whatever browser you use). Instead they download web pages that are then scanned and the significant words added to an index.

To simplify the terminology, I will refer to all the web searching programs as "spiders". (It takes less space and is easier to type.) These spiders are programs designed to find web addresses (URL's) and to download the pages. Some also do the indexing of the words on the page. However, Google uses a separate indexing program and stores the downloaded pages for future reference. Now if a single spider were being used to locate and download pages, the task would really be impossible. Sergey Brin and Lawrence Page, the originators of Google, published a paper while they were graduate students at Stanford that utilized three spiders. Each spider kept about 300 connections open simultaneously. With four spiders they could download about 600 pages per second. This paper referred to the prototype that became the commercial Google enterprise. Even with the prototype system they were able to download and index 24 million pages in a week. Their current methodology is proprietary and so is not public, but it is probably a significant improvement over their prototype system.

We can use the original Google system as a model of what could be used by search engines to prepare the index and database of web pages that you access when you send a query. The first step is to send a list of URLs to the spider to download. This is done by a server that maintains a list of URLs. The spider will download pages and also follow any hyperlinks to other pages. Addresses of pages that were linked to the original search list are also sent back to the server to be checked to see if they were already on the list. If not, they are added to the URL lists. Not every spider uses a URL server. The spider will continue crawling the web until it reaches a dead end or a page with no further links.

As I mentioned earlier, a spider isn't just working with one page, but has hundreds of connections open to different pages. Given that there are billions of pages on the Web, even with thousands of spiders collecting information, only a small fraction of the entire web is scanned. Some web sites, such as those with news or rapidly changing information are visited hourly. Every spider has a re-visitation policy that determines how frequently a page will be revisited and checked for changes.



There is another general policy that is usually programmed into these spiders. That is called the "politeness" policy. This is used to prevent the overloading of web sites. After all, there is a finite limit to bandwidth and it would be possible to overwhelm a web site with visits from multiple spiders in a short period of time. This policy provides for an interval of time to elapse between accesses by a spider. This time interval seems to vary from 20 seconds to 3-4 minutes. This would be the case where multiple pages need to be downloaded from a single server. Revisiting indexed and stored web sites occurs at less frequent intervals.

However, even this politeness policy is sometimes inadequate. Frequent visits by spiders may result in complaints being sent back to the owner of the spider. So it is also possible to enter code on a web page which asks the spider to not access or download a page or pages. This can be done by the addition of meta tags in the page header or by a robots.txt file placed in the root directory for the web site. This is especially appropriate for game pages. These pages use a dynamic format that changes when pages are viewed or links are followed. When a spider downloads these pages the game program may respond as if a very high-speed player were logged on. This can create problems for the program and may result in crashing the game server. So we now have the robot exclusion protocol being used by owners of web pages that do not want their pages included in the search engine indexing.

In the original Google system the web pages were sent to another program referred to as the indexer. This program sorts through every word on the page and stores them in a database. The exceptions are the simple words such as a, an, the. However, simply entering the words into a database is not sufficient. They have to be identified to the particular page from which they came, the location on that page and a relative ranking in importance. The frequency with which they appear on the page as well as the position on the page may be used in determining the weight or relative rank. Words in the title or near the top of the page may be ranked as more important. So the storage of the words include the URL, and a calculated weight in an encoded format.

The word database is then indexed to speed the retrieval of the information. This is usually done by the building of a Hash Table. Hashing evens out the alphabetical sections so that it takes no longer to find a "z" than it does a more popular letter like "m". It also separates the index from the actual entry for the word. This improves the efficiency of the storage of this information. The indexing and the Hash Table also speed the overall retrieval of the information. The complete web page is also stored in a separate location. Once the indexing process is completed, the information is available for your query.

Given the size of the web and the continuing changes to web pages, the spider's search is never ending. It may also be one where we will never have every page indexed. One other aspect of the size of the web and the time required for the crawling process is that broken links will always occur. If a page is not re-visited frequently, it may still be in the index and the database long after it has been removed from its server. Another situation may be where the URL has changed and the new location has not yet been crawled. So, the process is not perfect by any means.

The other aspect of searching the web is the design of the query you want to submit to a search engine. As I'm sure you know, you can simply list a few keywords in the search engine and hope you will get a useful result. Many times you will also get results that have no relationship to the information you are seeking. In some of these cases, you need to try

the advanced search or learn to use Boolean operators. Those most frequently used are:

AND – all the terms joined by "AND" must appear in the pages or documents.

OR – at least one of the terms joined by "OR" must appear in the pages or documents.

NOT – the term or terms following "NOT" must appear.

Quotation marks – Words between quotation marks must appear as a phrase.

Followed By – one of the terms must be followed by the other.

Near – one of the terms must be within a specified number of words of the other.

Generally, search engines can use these Boolean operators to provide results more closely aligned to the topic you are trying to locate.

Like everything else related to computers, web indexing and searching are not static technologies. The search engine companies are researching "natural language" queries such as those handled by "Ask Jeeves". Currently, these queries can accommodate only relatively simple phrases. However, there is heavy competition to develop an engine that can work with much more complex queries. Another area that is being pursued is "concept-based" searching. This would use a form of statistical analysis to determine if the page fit your query. And, as you may have read, Google has plans to put the content of the world's libraries on the web.

Just imagine what it would be like if we didn't have these search engines to help us find information on the web. So good searching and I hope you find what you are looking for.

Dr. Lewis is a former university & medical school professor. He has been working with personal computers for more than thirty years. He can be reached via e-mail: bwsail@yahoo.com.



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AARP training pays off in the valley

By Henry Johnson

We have spent the last two weeks "on the road" training the trainers who will train Counselors in January. Below is a photo of a group of Local Site Coordinators from The Valley who won awards for their work in the prior tax season--over 80% of their returns were e-filed. There were a few San Antonio award winners, but we expect to have almost all our San Antonio locations in the award arena next year, thanks to APCO.

We have reserved 10 days of classroom training at APCO in January to complete the TaxWise training for returning and new Counselors.

Crossroads Mall will host Tax-Aide for the 11th year, beginning February 1. There will be 19 total locations in Bexar County. We are preparing for distribution in January a brochure of sites and services.

See page 53 for a chart of locations.



2006 AARP TAX-AIDE

HOURS & DAYS OF OPERATION

NAME	ADDRESS	DAYS	HOURS	APPOINTMENT ONLY BY PHONE
CHURCH OF RESURRECTION	5909 WALZEM	WED	10AM-2PM	
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF UNIVERSAL CITY	1401 PAT BOOKER RD, UNIVERSAL CITY	SAT	8:30AM-3PM	
NAVAL & MARINE CORP RESERVE	3837 BINZ, ENGLEMAN ROAD	TUE	10AM-2PM	
RETIREE ACTIVITY CENTER, RANDOLPH AFB	CHAPEL CENTER, RANDOLPH AFB	THUR	9AM-1PM	652-6880
ST JOAN OF ARC CATHOLIC CHURCH	2829 ACKERMAN ROAD	TUE	9AM-1PM	
UNIVERSAL CITY LIBRARY	100 NORTHVIEW, UNIVERSAL CITY	WED	12:15PM-4PM	
CRESTHOLME BOYS & GIRLS CLUB	1602 GOLIAD ROAD	TUE	9AM-1PM	359-7822 call 3-6pm
AARP OFFICES	8507 N McCULLOUGH, SUITE C-9	MON-TUE	10AM-2PM	348-8684
		WED	2PM-6PM	
CHANDLER CENTER	137 W. FRENCH PLACE	FRI	9AM-1PM	
COMMANDERS HOUSE SENIOR CENTER	647 S. MAIN AVE	WED	9AM-1PM	
CROSSROADS MALL	IH-410 & FREDERICKSBURG RD	WED	9AM-4:30PM	
KINGSLEY PLACE	3360 OAKWELL CT	THUR	9AM-1PM	
LAS PALMAS LIBRARY	515 CASTROVILLE RD	WED	9AM-1PM	
LEON VALLEY COMMUNITY CENTER	6427 EVERS RD	TUE	9AM-1PM	
OASIS CENTER AT FOLEY'S	6161 NW LOOP 410	THUR-FRI	10AM-2PM	647-2546
ST MATTHEWS CATHOLIC CHURCH	10703 WURZBACH ROAD	WED	8:30AM-12:30PM	
SOUTH PARK MALL	2310 S.W. MILITARY DRIVE	MON	9AM-1PM	
SHUT-INS	VARIOUS			UNITED WAY -- 211
ARMY RESIDENCE CENTER	NOT OPEN TO THE PUBLIC	TUE	9AM-1PM	
AIR FORCE VILLAGE 1	NOT OPEN TO THE PUBLIC			

News Brief

E-mail from Bonnie Speedy, National Director, AARP Tax-Aide

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Computer Crimes

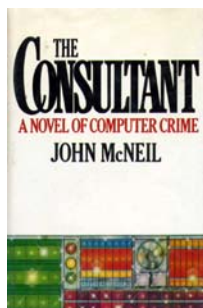
Susan Ives, Alamo PC

The Consultant, by John McNeil

Hardback, Coward, McCann & Geohegan, 1978, out of print, 297 pages

Chris Webb will tell you: he's the best computer consultant in London, 1978. What he doesn't tell his corporate clients is that he uses his access to their mainframes to detect sophisticated computer crimes and, rather than report them, creates trap doors so he can adopt these almost undetectable crimes as his own. He hits the jackpot when he gets a coveted contract to audit the computer procedures at Waterman's Bank and finds that the potentially high payoffs involve correspondingly high risk.

As far as I can determine this is the first mystery novel featuring a realistic computer crime. I expected a quaint

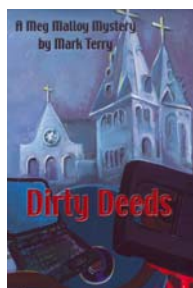


period piece but it's brilliant: as fresh as the day it was written, despite the IBM 370s, punch cards and remote access by teletype. The plot involves what Chris dubs a "weevil" and what we would now call a Trojan horse: a hidden program that attaches itself to the operating system, does its dirty work then overwrites itself with meaningless data. Highly recommended and worth tracking down at a library or used bookstore, especially for anyone who remembers those earlier days of corporate computing.

Dirty Deeds, by Mark Terry

Trade paperback, High Country Publishers, 2004, \$12.95, 192 pages

Meg Malloy, after making millions from the sale of her software company, takes a trouble-shooting job to help a friend recover a

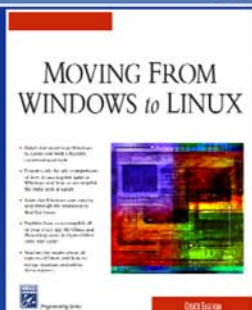


mega-church's donation records that disappeared in a crash of their secure Web server.

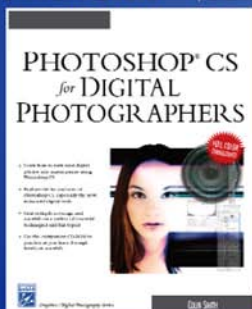
Nice debut novel for what promises to become a series. Great technical details about data recovery, video enhancement (did I forget to tell you about the porn video starring the pastor's daughter?) and a clever Trojan horse program.

Susan Ives, past president of Alamo PC, claims that computers are a mystery to her. Remember the Alibi Bookstore at 8055 West Ave. #101, San Antonio, TX (at the corner of West Ave. and Lockhill-Selma), (210) 344-7776, tries its darnest to keep the recommended books in stock.

COMPUTER BOOKS THAT DELIVER



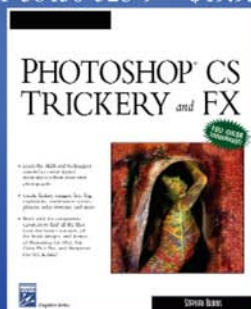
1-58450-280-0 \$44.95



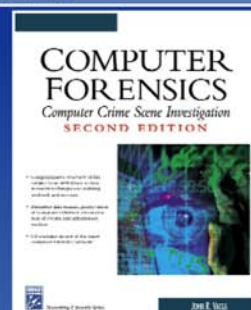
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Book Review

Tech Books for Non-Dummies

\$19.99 each

Published by Que

Reviewed by Gabriel Goldberg, APCUG Advisor

These guidebooks would be Sandy Berger's Great Age Guide to Better Living Through Technology, Great Age Guide to Gadgets and Gizmos, and Great Age Guide to the Internet. Each book offers an open and uncluttered design, amply illustrated with easy-to-read screen images and photos, and clearly written in an engaging style that builds confidence in the reader.

Sandy shares her sense of excitement and discovery with the reader, offering clear opinions on technology and how it affects us. Nothing is dumbed down — there's no mention of dummies or idiots — which is pleasantly different from many technology books. And whether you agree or disagree on individual items, you'll certainly know where Sandy stands.

The "Great Age" title is credited to Pablo Picasso, who said "Age only matters when one is aging. Now that I have arrived at a great age, I might as well be twenty." Chapters begin with other thought-provoking quotations. My favorite, highlighting the empowering nature of the books' subject matter, comes from marketing guru Greg Arnold, who said that "All greatness is achieved while performing outside your comfort zone." Although these books aren't uncomfortable reading, they may challenge you to try new things.

Each book opens onto Contents at a Glance, a list of chapter titles and page numbers which offers a handy, quick review of its content, and a brief "What's Inside" write-up. The Technology and Internet books include valuable sidebars calling out Sandy's Tips, Blooper Alerts, Lingo, and Trivia. Selected items in Gadgets and Gizmos are designated as Sandy's Favorites.

Great Age Guide to Better Living Through Technology reminds us how pervasive technology is, how much things have changed in our lifetimes, and how change is accelerating and never-ending. It addresses how technology has affected shopping, travel, health, finances, and even meeting people, and how families can take advantage of the digital world. Throughout, it encourages continued learning at any age and illustrates just how much there is that's worth learning. For example, it lists diverse search engines, giving attributes and advantages for each. Many are specialized and lesser known than Google or Yahoo but may be better for fulfilling certain information quests, such as the Library of Congress, available to all online.

The Great Age Guide to the Internet focuses on getting online and learning the language of the Internet, but also to have fun while avoiding problems. The book starts gently, introducing Internet concepts and terms, and assembles them into tips and tricks for Web searching, e-mailing, understanding Web advertising, and even building our own Web pages. It gives tips for picking an ISP (Internet service provider), demystifies browser windows components, and offers netiquette advice for instant messaging.

The Great Age Guide to Gadgets and Gizmos is a different sort of book. It serves as a catalog, shopping guide, and tour guide through current and future technology, offering gift ideas for oneself or Santa. It's not Consumer Reports, since it doesn't compare choices head-to-head, but its interesting and opinionated narrative provides both good and bad news about products. Its general advice and principles regarding technology keep it from becoming outdated as fast as a simple products list.

All three books are complementary, an easy read cover-to-cover, or useful as references for specific topics, services, and products. Their indexes locate topics quickly and, al-

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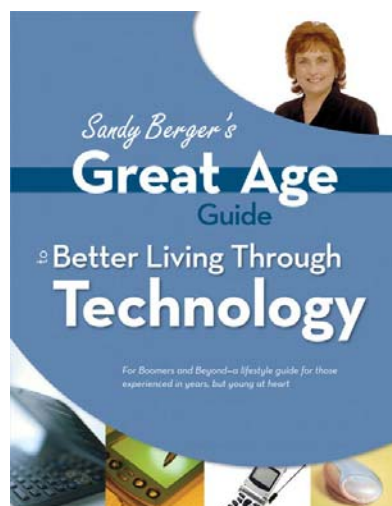


SONY





though there's some necessary overlap of content, each provides different information with varying orientation and emphasis. Overall, the books deliver usable information about evolving technology areas.



Great Age Guide to Better Living Through Technology

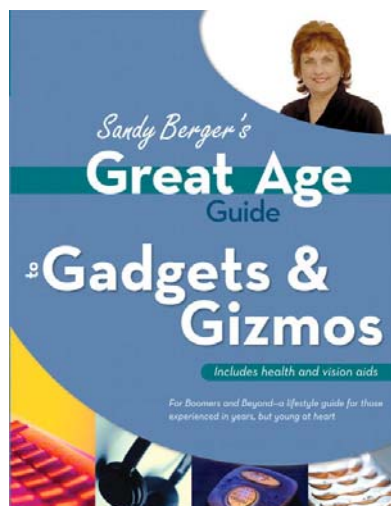
Author: Sandy Berger

Paperback: 288 pages

Publisher: Que

ISBN: 0789734400

Price: \$19.99



Great Age Guide to the Internet

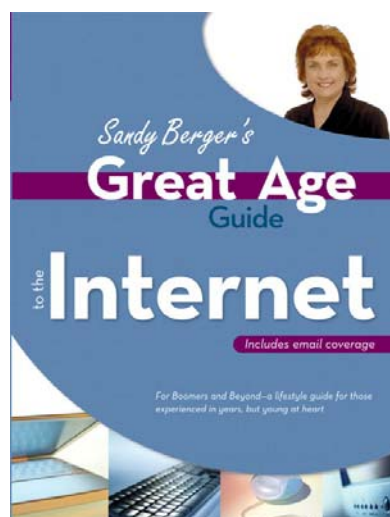
Author: Sandy Berger

Paperback: 288 pages

Publisher: Que

ISBN: 0789734427

Price: \$19.99



Great Age Guide to Gadgets and Gizmos

Author: Sandy Berger

Paperback: 264 pages

Publisher: Que

ISBN: 0789734419

Price: \$19.99

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Book Review

Web Mapping Illustrated

By Tyler Mitchell

\$39.95 US

Published by O'Reilly

Reviewed by Joseph de Leon

After reading this book, I was quite impressed with the author's knowledge of electronic mapping. The author knows what he is talking about and he doesn't confuse novices with jargon.

The ability to create maps from custom data has always been restricted to companies with vast resources. There has been a lot of interest in mapping software recently, and there are tons of tools available that will allow anyone to manipulate Geographic Information Systems (GIS).

The author demonstrates how to build systems that challenge expensive GIS packages using ordinary open source software. MapServer seems to be his favorite tool. Using this book, you should be able to get MapServer up and running on your computer.

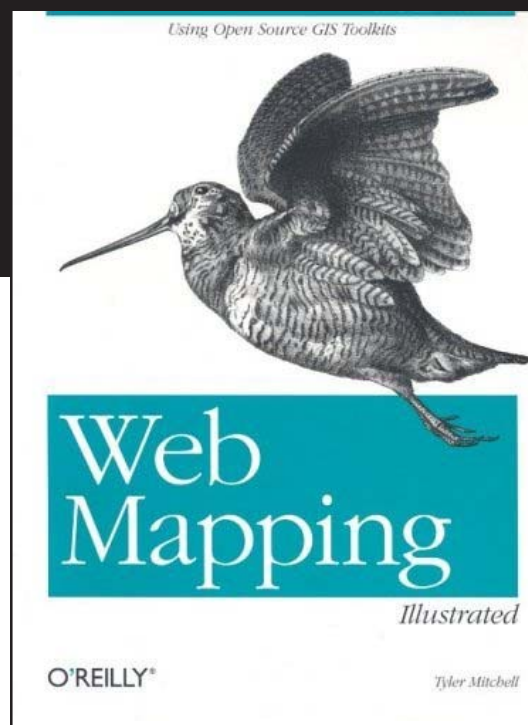
The author also gives readers a firm foundation in mapping technology. He explains map jargon thoroughly. Web Mapping Illustrated explains the jargon within the context of the software.


Even people who own a commercial GIS device would benefit from reading this book. The author explains how to install MapServer, collect map-related data, and develop solutions (including using web services).

My weakest area in reviewing this book was on the technical details, such as command line actions, installing components and compiling data. My eyes glazed over a few times when reading a few items like managing geospatial data and the discussion about developing web-mapping applications.

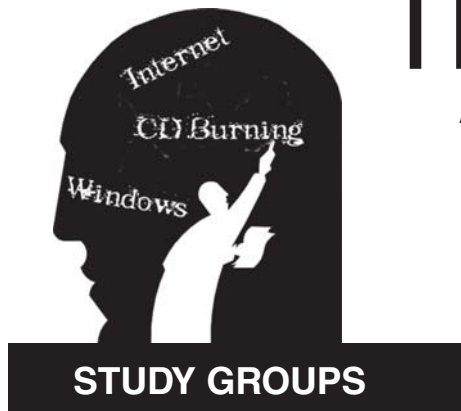
I did like that the book serves as a guide designed to get you started mapping quickly.

Contents: Introduction to Digital Mapping; Digital Mapping Tasks and Tools; Converting and Viewing Maps; Installing MapServer; Acquiring Map Data; Analyzing Map Data; Converting Map Data; Visualizing Mapping Data in a Desktop Program; Create and Edit Personal Map Data; Creating Static Maps; Publishing Interactive Maps on the Web; Accessing Maps Through Web Services; Managing a Spatial Database; Custom Programming with MapServer's MapScript; A Brief Introduction to Map Projections; MapServer Reference Guide for Vector Data Access; Index



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 We are closed. No classes today!  Happy New Year!	2 Genealogy 7 - 9 P.M.	3 (pr) Digital Camera & Photography 9 A.M. - Noon BOD 6:30 P.M. Microsoft Excel Basic 7 - 9 P.M.	4 (pr class 1 of 4) Bid with Confidence Intro to Internet Auctioning 7 - 9 P.M.	5 Student Practice Lab 9:00 A.M. - Noon (pr) Digital Camera & Photography 9 A.M. - Noon (pr class 1 of 8) Photoshoph 7 Class B 1 - 5 P.M. (ar) HGSN 6:30 - 8:30 P.M. Net 7 - 9 P.M.	6 (ar) SBS 2003 ~ 8 - 10 A.M. Dr. is In 9:00 A.M. - Noon (pr class 1 of 8) Photoshoph 7 Class B 1 - 5 P.M. (pr) PC Alamode Magazine Adobe PDF 7 - 9 P.M.	7 (ar) MCSE (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon C++ 2:30 - 4:30 P.M.
8 (pr class 1 of 2) Microsoft Widows XP 2 - 5 P.M.	9 AARP Tax-Aide Counselor 9:00 A.M. - Noon ~ 1 - 4 P.M. (Sr. Comp. pr class 1 of 6) Intro to Windows 1 - 3 P.M. General Meeting @ Crossroads 7 - 9 P.M. Norris Convention Center R.O.B. Presenter:	10 (pr) Digital Camera & Photography 9 A.M. - Noon (Sr. Comp. pr class 1 of 6) Intro to Windows II 10 - Noon Microsoft Excel Basic 7 - 9 P.M.	11 AARP Tax-Aide Counselor 9:00 A.M. - Noon ~ 1 - 4 P.M. Power Internet 10 A.M. - Noon (Sr. Comp. pr class 1 of 6) Basic Intro to Windows 10 A.M. - Noon (Sr. Comp. pr class 1 of 6) World Wide Web & E-mail 1 - 3 P.M. Jumpstart Your Home Page 5:30 - 7 P.M. (pr class 2 of 5) Bid with Confidence Intro to Internet Auctioning 7 - 9 P.M.	12 Student Practice Lab 9:00 A.M. - Noon (pr) Digital Camera & Photography 9 A.M. - Noon (pr class 2 of 8) Photoshoph 7 Class B 1 - 5 P.M.	13 Dr. is In 9:00 A.M. - Noon AARP Tax-Aide Counselor 9:00 A.M. - Noon ~ 1 - 4 P.M. (pr class 2 of 8) Photoshoph 7 Class B 1 - 5 P.M.	14 (pr) Photo Editing 8 - 10 A.M. AARP Tax-Aide Counselor 9:00 A.M. - Noon ~ 1 - 4 P.M. (ar) MCSE (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon (pr) Photo Editing 10 A.M. - Noon Commodore 1 - 4 P.M.
15	16 Martin Luther King Day AARP Tax-Aide Counselor 9:00 A.M. - Noon ~ 1 - 4 P.M. (Sr. Comp. pr class 2 of 6) Intro to Windows 1 - 3 P.M.	17 (pr) Digital Camera & Photography 9 A.M. - Noon (Sr. Comp. pr class 2 of 6) Intro to Windows II 10 - Noon Microsoft Excel Basic 7 - 9 P.M.	18 AARP Tax-Aide Counselor 9:00 A.M. - Noon ~ 1 - 4 P.M. (Sr. Comp. pr class 2 of 6) Intro to Windows II 10 - Noon (Sr. Comp. pr class 2 of 6) World Wide Web & E-mail 1 - 3 P.M. (pr class 3 of 4) Bid with Confidence Intro to Internet Auctioning 7 - 9 P.M.	10 Student Practice Lab 9:00 A.M. - Noon (pr) Digital Camera & Photography 9 A.M. - Noon (pr class 3 of 8) Photoshoph 7 Class B 1 - 5 P.M.	20 Dr. is In 9:00 A.M. - Noon (pr class 3 of 8) Photoshoph 7 Class B 1 - 5 P.M.	21 (ar) MCSE (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon (pr class 1 of 1) Surf and Search 2 - 5 P.M. C++ 2:30 - 4:30 P.M.
22 (pr class 2 of 2) Microsoft Widows XP 2 - 5 P.M.	23 AARP Tax-Aide Counselor 9:00 A.M. - Noon ~ 1 - 4 P.M. (Sr. Comp. pr class 3 of 6) Intro to Windows 1 - 3 P.M. CorelDRAW 12 6 - 8 P.M.	24 (pr) Digital Camera & Photography 9 A.M. - Noon (Sr. Comp. pr class 3 of 6) Intro to Windows II 10 - Noon (Sr. Comp. pr class 1 of 6) Intro to Windows I 1:30 - 3:30 P.M. Microsoft Excel Basic 7 - 9 P.M.	25 AARP Tax-Aide Counselor 9:00 A.M. - Noon ~ 1 - 4 P.M. (Sr. Comp. pr class 3 of 6) Intro to Windows II 10 - Noon (Sr. Comp. pr class 3 of 6) World Wide Web & E-mail 1 - 3 P.M. (pr class 4 of 4) Bid with Confidence Intro to Internet Auctioning 7 - 9 P.M.	26 Student Practice Lab 9:00 A.M. - Noon (pr) Digital Camera & Photography 9 A.M. - Noon (pr class 4 of 8) Photoshoph 7 Class B 1 - 5 P.M. ? ? Advanced Access 7 - 9 P.M. ? ? ? (Dot) NetNuke Portal 7 - 9 P.M.	27 Dr. is In 9:00 A.M. - Noon AARP Tax-Aide Counselor 9:00 A.M. - Noon ~ 1 - 4 P.M. (pr class 4 of 8) Photoshoph 7 Class B 1 - 5 P.M.	28 (ar) MCSE (Adv) 8:30 A.M. - Noon AARP Tax-Aide Counselor 9:00 A.M. - Noon ~ 1 - 4 P.M. Learning Center Desk Staff Meeting 1 - 3 P.M.
29	30 (Sr. Comp. pr class 4 of 6) Intro to Windows 1 - 3 P.M.	31 (pr) Digital Camera & Photography 9 A.M. - Noon (Sr. Comp. pr class 4 of 6) Intro to Windows II 10 - Noon (Sr. Comp. pr class 2 of 6) Intro to Windows I 1:30 - 3:30 P.M. Microsoft Excel Basic 7 - 9 P.M. (if required)			Calendar is subject to change, Please call the Learning Center 736-0700 or visit the online calendar listing at < http://alamopc.org/calendar.html >	

AlamoPC Organization



The Learning Center

Alamo PC Organization classes and study groups

Genealogy Study Group

For everyone interested in using their computer for genealogy. We will discuss currently available genealogy software, their pros and cons and meeting participants views as to best software to use for both beginners and advanced genealogists.

Contact: Jim Collier
<jcinquiry@earthlink.net>
210-710-5660

When: First Monday, 7-9 pm

Where: Learning Center.

Pre-registration: No
Technical Rating ★ - ★★

HGSI Study Group

The premise of the HGS Investor SIG is, "Knowledge becomes stronger when passed on to others." We have created an environment for continuing education and open discussion between well informed members and guest speakers in matters of using Fundamental and Technical Analysis for the buying and selling of equities. Meetings are held on the First Thursday of each month in the UBS Conference Room, in Suite 300 at 200 Concord Plaza Drive, at 6:30PM to 8:30PM. If you wish to be added to our mailing list or for more information, contact below.

Contact: Maynard Burstein
<maynardb@juno.com> 735-3288

When: 1st Thursday, 6:30-8:30pm

Where: UBS/Paine Webber, 200 Concord Plaza Dr. Suite 300

Pre-registration: Call Maynard
Technical Rating ★ - ★★★

.NET Study Group

This is a study group for those interested in developing Windows and Web applications using Microsoft's .NET technology. We will use development modules and applications for the DNN Portal using VB.NET and C# as a basis for demonstrating .Net development. Guest speakers occasionally present new technology and development tools available for .Net Developers. Door prizes (books, software, shirts, etc.) are distributed at most meetings.

Contact: Joe Brazell 345-2207

When: 1st Thursday, 7-9pm

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: No
Technical Rating ★★★

MCSE Advanced Study Group

The MCSE Advanced SIG, affectionately known as 'The Geeks', is currently studying Microsoft's new ISA Server 2004 in anticipation of it's being included in the soon to be released Service Pack 1 for Small

Business Server 2003. The SIG meets every Saturday morning from 8:30 until noon. Space is limited and the subject matter is very advanced. Therefore membership is restricted. Please contact Larry Lentz before attempting to attend.

Contact: Larry Lentz, MCSE on NT & W2K, MCDBA, MCSA: Messaging
<Larry@LentzComputer.Net>

When: Every Saturday, 8:30-noon

Where: Contact Larry

Pre-registration: Yes - contact Larry
Technical Rating ★★ ★★

Small Business Server Study Group

The Alamo PC Organization Small Business Server Special Interest Group (APCO SBS SIG) celebrated its first birthday on Friday, July 8th. We had a record turnout of 24 despite several 'regulars' having to be out of town or taking care of clients. The technical portion was a brief discussion of how to configure Internet Over the Internet (RPC over HTTP).

Our next meeting will be on Friday, August 5th. After the Taco Social we will have a discussion of WSUS, Windows Software Update Services.

For more information, please contact group chair, Larry Lentz at Larry@LentzComputer.net, or visit the group web site at <http://www.LentzComputer.net/SBS.>

Small Business Server Certification Study Group

The SBS Certification Study Group will focus on presentation of material related to Microsoft's Small Business Server Exam Preparation. The target audience includes computer consultants, and network administrators holding advanced Microsoft certifications MCP and MCSE. Experience with small business server product support is important. Due to the anticipated pace of the class and complexity of material, attendees should have previously passed an advanced Microsoft Server Certification Exam (MCP or MCSE) and be experienced and competent with SBS Win2000 or SBS Win2003.

Contact: Ed or Therese Weitz for information and registration.

Phone 210-946-4700 or e-mail <ed22@satx.rr.com>

When: Tuesdays, 6-9 pm

We will not meet on the Tuesday when the Alamo PC board meets

Where: Learning Center

Technical Rating ★★ ★★

Advanced Access Study Group

This study group is designed for people with experience with Microsoft Access who wish to learn and share ideas on advanced forms, VBA code, reports, queries, etc. Attendees should already be familiar with database design basics and the basics of building forms, reports and queries in Access. Topics include using graphs, database security, SQL Server connectivity, customer functions or other topics of interest.

Contact: Joseph Kubon
<joseph.kubon@padgett-cpa.com>
210-828-6281 x 1554

When: Fourth Thursday, 7-9pm

Where: Learning Center.

Pre-registration: No
Technical Rating ★★ ★

C/C ++ Study Group

Please note we are currently a study group and no longer a Class. C/C++ Study Group Our group consists of 3 to 6 regular members who meet twice a month to discuss their plans and progress on development of software for experimental use. We do not plan to offer C or C++ courses in this study group. To join the study group, get acquainted with some of its members and consider preparing a brief presentation of your planned or current efforts.

Contact:
Bruce McAlexander
<mcalexb@satx.rr.com> 210-680-0231

Murry Adams
<mnadams@texas.net> 210-696-0047

Carl Deneke
<cdenek@Texas.net> 210-496-6397

When: First and Third Saturday, 2:30 pm

Where: Learning Center.

Pre-registration: No
Technical Rating ★★ - ★★ ★

Commodore Users of SA

Contact: Diana Jones
830-303-1220

When: Second Saturday, 1-4 pm

Where: Learning Center.

Pre-registration: No
Technical Rating ★ - ★★ ★★

STUDY GROUPS (cont.)

Power Internet Study Group

Current Internet users can learn more. Each month a different Internet application will be discussed, such as 64 bit computers, SATA HDD technology, e-mail, browser use, MS Outlook, and virus protection in communications. This is a good place to share interests and insights about your experiences on the World Wide Web.

Contact: John Woody

<jwoody@texas.net>

210-494-5684

When: 2nd Wednesday, 10am-noon

Where: Learning Center

Preregistration: No

Technical Rating ★★

WordPerfect Evening Study Group

We demonstrate projects and features of the latest version of WordPerfect. We also like to work on real life situations with our members who have questions.

Contact: Cynthia Thompson

210-655-1058

When: 4th Wednesday, 7-9pm

Where: Call Cynthia for directions

Pre-registration: Yes - Call Cynthia

Technical Rating ★ - ★★★

Computer Literacy Class

Brush up on your computer skills. Students learn about the parts of the computer, acquire keyboard and mouse skills, and gain an understanding of surfing the web and using email. The course prepares students to enroll in a variety of second-level courses.

Contact: Ruben Sanchez

When: Sat. Aug 20, 27, Sep 3 1-3 pm

Sat. Sep 17, 24, Oct 1 1-3 pm

Sat. Oct 15, 22, 29 1-3 pm

Where: Resource Center

Pre-registration: Yes - Call the Learning Center, 210-736-0080

Technical Rating ★

DotNetNuke Portal Study Group

Learn DotNetNuke portal software for hosting your website. Focus on hands-on configuration and use of the DNN 3.x portal. The class will discuss the portal framework and configuration of a DNN site. Setup web pages, insert modules on the pages, modify and edit the look of the pages and data in the pages. Modules include Calendar, Announcements, Forums, Blogs, Contacts, Links, Surveys and HTML.

Contact: Joe Brazell 345-2207

When: 7PM - 9PM Sept. 29, Oct. 27 (no November or December meeting)

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating: ★

New Class Starting

Student Practice Lab - A specific time period for students taking Alamo PC Courses to use Computer Lab (Classroom One) to practice their class assignments. Students may also make up missed class days, if the instructor has provided the course material to the individual. Seating is limited and on a first come, first serve basis.

Pre-registration is required. Call (210) 736-0080, or (210) 736-0700

FREE CLASSES

APCO Retro (Antique Computer Users Group)

We're initially only going to meet online, through the mailing list I've established using Yahoo! Groups. Membership is limited to Alamo PC members, but anyone can join the list by sending a message to <apcoretro-subscribe@yahooogroups.com>." Or, if you're reading the electronic version of the PC Alamode where this text appears, you can join APCO Retro simply by going to <<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/apcoretro/join>>

Contact: Shane Hicks

<shane@absolute-power-computing.com>

When: Anytime

Where: Cyberspace

Pre-registration: Must sign-up on <APCORETRO@yahooogroups.com>

Technical Rating: ★ - ★★★★★

CorelDRAW I Class

This basic class discusses basic tools and effects, concentrating on fills, blends, envelopes and other special effects for the next few months.

Contact: Steve Tech

<stephentechjr@yahoo.com>

210-675-2880

When: 4th Monday, 6-8pm

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating ★★

Digital Camera & Photography

Learn how use your digital camera, plus all the tips and tricks to get better pictures when you take them. The workshop will have two parts. Part one starts with using your camera and field trips to interesting local spots to learn photography techniques. Part two deals with editing your images using Microsoft Digital Image 2006 and, extra tips and tricks about matting and framing plus interesting uses for your photos.

When: 8 weeks, Tuesday and Thursday each week, starting the first week of November 2005; 9 to noon

Contact: Joe M. Davis

Where: Learning Center plus field trips

Pre-registration - YES Call Learning Center at 210-736-0080

Technical rating: ★-★★

eBay - Bid with Confidence: An Introduction to Internet Auctions

This 4-session class shows you how to buy and sell at Internet auctions using the eBay system (excludes real estate and automobiles).

Contact: Learning Center 736-0080
<learncenter@alamopc.org>

When: 7-9pm on Wednesdays.

4, 11, 18 and 25 January 2006

Where: Learning Center, Room 1

Pre-registration: Yes

Technical Rating: ★

Excel 2000 Class - Basic

This class is intended for people who want to do significant projects or develop skills for the workplace. As such it moves at fairly brisk pace and includes homework assignments. Students will become familiar with Excel 2000's basic functionality, menus, toolbars, icons and shortcut keys. Learn how to create, format, save and print an Excel spreadsheet. Also, understand and use formulas, work with worksheets and workbooks, and learn the basic productivity elements of Excel. The Excel 2000 Class will use the Excel 2000 Step By Step book. This book will be helpful but is not required.

Contact: Bill Eastridge

<weastridge@satx.rr.com>

When: First four Tuesdays of odd numbered months (Jan, Mar, May, etc.) 7-9pm

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: Yes

Technical Rating ★ - ★★★★★

Excel 2000 Class - Intermediate

This class is follow-on to the Excel Basics Class and is intended people who want to do significant projects or develop skills for the workplace. It covers conditional formatting, absolute addressing, sorting, subtotaling, filtering, charting, functions and other subjects as time permits. The Excel 2000 Class will use the Excel 2000 Step By Step book. This book will be helpful but is not required.

Contact: Bill Eastridge

<weastridge@satx.rr.com>

When: First four Tuesdays of Feb., June and Oct. 7-9pm

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: Yes

Technical Rating ★★★

HTML and Beyond Class

Learn how to design, build and manage your own web site using HTML.

Students should attend the Home Page Jumpstart Class and have familiarity with the Windows Operating System. The Six (to Eight if needed) Session class will begin a new cycle each March and September.

Contact: Mike Bianchi

<webmaster@alamopc.org>

When: Saturdays, 4-8 pm

Where: Learning Center

Prerequisite: Home Page Jumpstart Class, familiarity with Windows

Pre-registration: yes

To register e-mail Mike at

<webmaster@alamopc.org>

Technical Rating: ★★

Home Page Jumpstart

A general introduction to developing your own Internet web page. It is *not* a course on HTML. Includes a 20+ page manual and a training disk. Not hands-on.

Contact: Susan Ives

<suives@texas.net> 210-694-4582

When: 2nd Wednesday, 5:30-7pm

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating: ★ - ★★

Internet Jumpstart Class

Learn more about the mail program Outlook Express, which is a subset of Microsoft Outlook. The first class is entirely on e-mail and the second class is for people who have never seen the Internet, who have not been on the Internet or who are on the Internet but are just beginning to find their way around.

Contact: Sandy Knight

<sknight@satx.rr.com>

When: 2nd & 4th Sunday of even numbered months, 2pm - 5pm.

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: Desired, but walk-ins are welcome

Technical Rating ★

Visit the Alamo PC Learning Center

Media Center

Learn all about computers with hundreds of books and dozens of video tapes. Enjoy our large selection of techno-fiction.

A comfortable seating area is available.

Call (210) 736-0700

Introduction to Photo Editing

We will primarily use Photoshop Elements software, although we will also use Corel PhotoPaint and ArcSoft Photostudio occasionally. Two classes, one at 8 a.m., another at 10 a.m.

Contact: Clarke Bird

<cbird@satx.rr.com>

When: 2nd Saturday, 8-10am, 10am-noon

Pre-registration: Yes - Learning Center

Technical Rating: ★ - ★★★

Power Point class

This course features a structured curriculum for Microsoft PowerPoint. Students will be introduced to PowerPoint and will experience hands on development of an entertaining PowerPoint presentation. Emphasis will be placed on Inserting Graphics, Text, Layout, Titles and Slide Transitions.

Contact: Learning Center 736-0700

When: Dates and time to be announced

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: Yes

Technical Rating: ★

Surf and Search

A new beginners' class to explore the Internet. Learn how to search for long-lost cousins, how to research Aunt Jemima's antique tiara or how to find just about anything on the Internet (including yourself). While the class will be largely "Google-based" we will also look at many other options and will be sharing our own favorite sites. Students should have familiarity with the Windows Operating System.

When: Saturday, Jan. 21; 2 pm - 5 pm

Where: Alamo PC Organization Computer Learning Center

Tuition fee: Free with membership

Technical Rating:

Class Leader: William Hudson (Please note: William Hudson is Not the same person as Bill Hudson who teaches Senior Comp courses)

Pre-registration is required. Call the Alamo PC Computer Learning Center at (210) 736-0080, or (210) 736-0700

Windows XP Class

This class is intended to help you make the transition to Windows XP the latest version of Microsoft's Operating System. Subjects covered include the features of and how to configure Windows XP.

Contact: Sandy Knight

<sknight@satx.rr.com>

When: 2nd & 4th Sundays of odd numbered months, 2pm-5pm.

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: Yes

Technical Rating ★ - ★★

Word 2000 Class

Become familiar with Word 2000's basic functionality, menus, toolbars and shortcut keys. Students will learn how to create, view, format, save and print a Word document. Optional textbook: Word 2000 Step by Step book (this will be helpful but is not required). Student should have basic knowledge of Windows and be familiar with operating the mouse and keyboard.

Contact: Ruben Sanchez

When: First four Tuesdays of even-numbered months (Feb, Apr, Jun, Aug, Oct, Dec), 7-9pm

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: Yes, call Learning Center at 736-0080

Technical Rating ★ - ★★★

Technical Content Ratings

- ★ For the beginner, no experience necessary and no prerequisite.
- ★★ Assumes some basic familiarity with the subject but is not a technical course.
- ★★★ Assumes that the student is somewhat familiar with the subject and will discuss.
- ★★★★ Assumes that the student is competent in the material and will be technical.

New Class Starting

Student Practice Lab - A specific time period for students taking Alamo PC Courses to use Computer Lab (Classroom One) to practice their class assignments. Students may also make up missed class days, if the instructor has provided the course material to the individual. Seating is limited and on a first come, first serve basis.

Pre-registration is required. Call (210) 736-0080, or (210) 736-0700

FEE-BASED CLASSES

Photoshop Elements & Photoshop 7 Class - \$

2005 Schedule:

November - each Thursday 1pm-5pm
Calendar Class; learn to make personal calendars for friends & family; bring photos; fee \$20.00; registration and completion of Photoshop 7 or Elements 2 class required.

Photoshop 7 classes - 8 weeks on Fridays, 1 to 5 p.m. The course will teach you how to modify and combine images to create realistic composite images.

When: Fridays 1-5 pm except holidays

Where: Learning Center

Fees: \$90 Alamo PC members (includes textbook) \$20 for Previous Students to retake the same class

Pre-registration: Yes - call Learning Center at 210-736-0080.

Technical Rating ★ - ★★★

Contact: Beverly Bihn

<bihndolls@att.net>

2006 - Thursdays from 1 to 5 p.m. will offer Photoshop 7 instruction class "B" with different lessons and text during January - February teaching the basic tools, palettes and procedures for Photoshop 7. Registration is required and a fee of \$90.00 for first time participants or \$20.00 for those who have previously taken the class.

2006 - Fridays in January - February from 1 - 5 P.M. will offer Elements 2 instruction classes for a fee of \$90.00 for first time participants or \$20.00 for repeats. Registration is required and you must be a member of Alamo PC.

Private or Semi-Private Tutorials - \$

Develop your skills at your own pace and at a time that fits your schedule. Introductory private tutorials for one, two, or three students. Choose from:

- Microsoft Word
- Microsoft Excel
- Basic Computer Skills, or
- Keyboarding/Typing

Contact: Learning Center (210) 736-0080 or 736-0700

When: Days and hours are arranged between the student(s) and teacher.

Where: Learning Center

Fees: 1 student: \$35 per hour, 10 hours for \$300. 2 or 3 students: per student—\$20 per hour, 10 hours for \$150

Pre-registration: Yes—call or visit the Learning Center

Technical Rating: ★

Alamo PC Organization now offers members private or semi-private tutorials

Keyboarding/Typing
Basic Computer Skills
Microsoft Word

Rates for one student

\$35 per hour

\$300 for 10 hours

Rates for two or three students

\$20 per student per hour

\$150 per student for 10 hours

Enjoy private instruction on days and at hours that fit **your** schedule at our modern facility in Crossroads Mall.

Call or visit the Learning Center to register

(210) 736-0080

Introduction to MS Access Databases Class - \$

This class is a hands-on beginner's class on Microsoft Access offered in four 4-hour sessions (16 hours total) over four consecutive weekends. The focus is on designing and building database applications. The fee includes a syllabus and a textbook. Prerequisites: Experience using Microsoft Office programs such as Word and Excel.

Contact: Joe Brazell,
<ejbrazell@satx.rr.com>, 210-345-2207

When: Saturdays, October 8, 15, 22, 29, 8:00 - Noon

Where: Learning Center

Fees: \$60 Alamo PC Members; \$75 Non-Members

Pre-Registration: Required - Call the Learning Center at 210-736-0080.

Technical Rating: ★★

Technical Content Ratings

★ For the beginner, no experience necessary and no prerequisite.

★★ Assumes some basic familiarity with the subject but is not a technical course.

★★★ Assumes that the student is somewhat familiar with the subject and will discuss.

★★★★ Assumes that the student is competent in the material and will be technical.

FEE-BASED CLASSES (cont.)

Senior Comp Classes - \$

Introductory classes for people 45 and older. New classes begin approximately every two months. Classes are held at the Computer Learning Center and meet for two hours, once a week for six weeks. Pre-registration is required. Senior Comp Classes are backed by eight years of proven success!

Senior Comp Basic Introduction To Windows - \$

The Basic Introduction To Windows class is designed for people who do not have a computer yet or have just gotten one and don't know how to "turn it on". SOME of the material found in the Introduction To Windows Class will be covered but at a MUCH slower pace and with lots more "hands on" practice. Students will learn the basics of using the computer and some word processing. Taking the next course, Introduction To Windows I, will still be necessary for students who want to be productive with their computers, but the students will be better able to understand what the Introduction To Windows Instructor is teaching. Internet and email will NOT be covered in this course.

When: 6 weeks, Wednesdays; Jan 11, 18, 25, Feb 1, 8, 15; 10 am to 12 pm

Instructors: Andy Roca, Donna Dudley

Where: Learning Center

Fees: The First Class is \$60.00. To repeat this class or if going from Basic Introduction To Windows, to Introduction To Windows I or from either beginning class to Introduction To Windows II the fee is \$40.00.

Pre-registration: YES Call Learning Center at 210-736-0080

Senior Comp Introduction To Windows I - \$

Our Introduction To Windows I course covers the fundamentals of using a computer, from turning it on to working with Microsoft Windows 98 and Windows XP. In this class you will learn how to: Open, Close, Save, Delete, Copy, and Move files; work with Files and Folders; customize your Desktop Layout; and to Resize and Move program windows. You will

also be introduced to several "free" programs already on your computer, including: Wordpad - for basic word processing; Paint - for basic graphics work; Computer Solitaire and other games; and a Calculator.

Choice of two class sessions:

When: 6 weeks, Mondays Jan 9, 16, 23, 30, Feb 6, 13; 1 to 3 pm

Instructor: Don Robinson

OR

When: 6 weeks, Tuesdays Jan 24, 31, Feb 7, 14, 21, 28; 1:30 to 3:30 pm

Instructor: Audrey Henkin

Where: Learning Center

Fees: The First Class is \$60.00. To repeat this class or if going from Basic Introduction To Windows, to Introduction To Windows I or from either beginning class to Introduction To Windows II the fee is \$40.00.

Pre-registration: YES Call Learning Center at 210-736-0080

Senior Comp Introduction To Windows II - \$

This course takes students beyond the basic computing information we present in our Beginning Windows course. We cover some Word Processing, Task Bars, Windows Explorer, and Finding Files. The student will also learn about E-Mail, and the Internet. The Internet information focuses on how to get on the Internet, how to search it for the information you want, and how to download program updates. The E-mail information focuses on sending email and working with email attachments. The course features "hands on" exercises in class. The course uses advanced sections of the same textbook employed in the Introduction To Windows Classes.

When: 6 weeks, Tuesdays Jan 10, 17, 24, 31, Feb 7, 14; 10 am to noon

Instructor: Bill Hudson

Where: Learning Center

Fees: The First Class is \$60.00. To repeat this class or if going from Basic Introduction To Windows, to Introduction To Windows I or from either beginning class to Introduction To Windows II the fee is \$40.00.

Pre-registration: YES Call Learning Center at 210-736-0080

Senior Comp Internet And E-Mail - \$

The Internet and E-mail course will cover basic techniques needed to effectively and enjoyably "surf the net." Students will learn how to find

information on the net, download files, applications and graphics, and how to purchase items from "e-commerce" sites. Depending on student interest, the class will learn about important Internet issues like privacy, credit card security, and information reliability. Depending on time constraints, students may also cover more advanced topics like using the Internet for long distance communication, "Web Cams," and enjoying "streaming" audio and video.

When: 6 weeks, Wednesdays Jan 11, 18, 25, Feb 1, 8, 15; 1 to 3 pm

Instructor: Don Robinson

Where: Learning Center

The first class is \$60.00. To repeat the Internet and Email Class the fee \$40.00

Pre-registration - YES Call Learning Center at 210-736-0080

COMPUTER CLINIC

The Doctor Is In

Each Friday morning, volunteer "Computer Doctors" share their time at the Computer Learning Center to handle technical hardware and software questions and solve problems. They attempt to troubleshoot hardware and sort out software problems on site. If the problem is beyond their means, the member is referred to one of the repair shops that advertise with Alamo PC. The repair shop does charge for the problem. We do the work at the Computer Learning Center as a member-to-member benefit, with donations requested.

What to bring with you:

- Your Alamo PC membership card
- Your computer and all connecting cables, cords, software drivers or programs related to the problem area
- You do not need to bring your monitor, mouse, or keyboard unless you are having a specific problem with those items. Make sure you have the keycode for all of your software.
- If you are having problems with your scanner, printer, or something that hooks up to your computer; bring that item in addition to your computer etc. plus all connecting cables and software (don't forget the keycode for your software)

When: Every Friday 9 am to noon

Where: Alamo PC Organization
Computer Learning Center

Prerequisites: Bring your hardware and all connecting cables, cords, software drivers or programs related to the problem area

Tuition fee: Donations for this service are requested, the funds are used to purchase testing and other equipment to use at the Dr Is In sessions.

Technical Rating: ★

Help Numbers

Can you help a new member with a new computer? Are you proficient in software not listed? Can you help with a title currently showing only one volunteer? Call John Gaddis at 494-9449.

Step One

1 Look down the list for the software program you need help with; note the number in front of the title.

2 Then look down the list to the right for the corresponding number for the person who may be able to help you.

Please observe the times given by the volunteers name to call for phone help.

0 ACT!	28 Quattro Pro
1 Access	29 Quick Books
2 AlphaFour	30 Quicken
6 dBase	31 Photo Album
7 Delphi	32 Windows 98
8 Dreamweaver 3	35 WinFax Pro
9 Networking	36 MS Word Windows
10 Excel	37 WordPerfect
11 Family Origins for Win.	39 Visual Basic
12 FrontPage 98	40 Internet Explorer
13 Flash 4	41 MS Outlook Express
14 Genealogy	42 Home Help
16 RoadRunner	43 Hardware
18 MS Publisher	44 OpenOffice
21 Paradox	45 Time&Chaos
22 PageMaker	46 Opera
23 Paint Shop Pro	47 Mozilla
24 Adobe Photoshop	48 MySQL
25 Crystal Reports	49 .Net
26 PowerPoint	50 Windows XP

Step Two

Expertise	Name	Phone	Availability	E-mail
(2)	Tom Drawert	696-9601	M-F 6-9pm; S/S 9am-6pm	
(12,24)	Steve Northover	497-5750	M-F 7-9pm; S/S 12-3pm	
(6)	Bowen Moursund	736-1791	M-F 9am-4pm	
(7, 21)	Keith Marbach	(830)303-9344	M-F 9am-4pm	
(7, 21)	Ed Conner	696-0191	4-7pm	
(9, 10, 16, 23, 30, 32, 33, 35, 42)	John Bolton	658-3060	M-F 6-9pm;	
(0, 10, 11, 26, 29, 30, 35, 36, 42)	Jean Smith	822-1133	M-F 10am-8pm; Sun 12-8pm	
(11, 14)	Bob Harris	492-3683	M-F 7-9pm	
(14)	Bob Battaglia	651-5642	9am-7pm	
(18)	Lou Harris	492-3683	M-F 7-9pm	louharris@alumni.utexas.net
(18, 23, 31)	Herb Langthorp	651-6087	M-F 6-10pm; 6-9:30pm on S/S	pokeypub@satx.rr.com
(44, 45, 46, 47, 48)	Chris Montgomery	490-2415	M-F 7-9pm;S/S 12-6pm	
(21)	Paul Woods	653-8940	4-7pm	
(25)	Barry Woitena		M-F 9-5pm	dallasmx@swbell.net
(28)	Brian Collie	828-1505	M-Sat 10am-5pm	
(36)	Christel Villarreal			cvillarreal@stic.net
(37)	Cynthia Thompson	655-1058	9am-9pm	
(9,42, 43)	Frank Flores	344-2231	M-Sat 9am-1pm	frflores@grandecom.net
(10, 43)	Mario Flores	566-4048	10am-11pm. Leave name, number.	
(8, 13, 26)	Robert Carrasco			carrasco_r@yahoo.com
(1, 10, 25, 26, 36)	Joseph Kubon	828-6281 x 1554	12noon - 8pm M-F and S/S	
(1, 10, 36)	David de Leon	614-3100	1-4pm M/F 12noon-8pm Sat & Sun.	
(9, 14, 16, 32, 36, 40, 41,42, 43)	Bruce Cramer	865-2933	M-Sat 9am-3pm	service@pcpro4u.com
(40, 41, 50)	Ted Ressler			catechist@gmail.com


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Classified Ads

E-mail or snail mail (address on page 3) your ad to the Editor, PC Alamo at: editor@alamopc.org. Copy deadline is 10th of month preceeding publication. Classified ads are free to members of Alamo PC.

- For Sale** Scrapbook Tote Crop-in-Style XXL is new with pull up handle, fixed ball bearing wheels, removable pen caddy hold 75 pens, 18 scissors loops, punch storage. Holds multiple albums up to 12" x 15" and anything else you can think of for the growing scrapbooker. Store price is \$140.00 plus tax and I am asking \$95.00. Call David at 492-5153. <marjdave1@sbcglobal.net>
- Free** Free to anyone who needs them: FAX paper rolls, one new, one half used. Heat sensitive paper. (8 1/2 x 98 ft.) I got a new FAX machine that doesn't use them, so if someone wants them... E-mail for more info: <joecool@satx.rr.com>
- For Sale** 100Gig hard drive, 512Mg RAM, Flat screen monitor, Speakers (with subwoofer), DVD drive, CD/DVD writer (separate drive) \$700, negotiable. <richardstrout@hotmail.com>
- For Sale** View Sonic Professional Series P75f+ Flat Screen CRT 17" monitor. Purchased June 1, 2004. Hot key to boost brightness levels for intense, vivid colors with video, DVD, graphics and gaming. Toggle back to normal brightness for text. Ultra-fine 0.25mm aperture grille pitch. \$99 call Sandy 372-9985 or <sknight@satx.rr.com>
- For Sale** Hewlett Packard Laser Jet 1100se black and white printer with extra unopened Laser Jet Toner Cartridge. Used occasionally for 3 months. No problems. \$65 total. Contact Doris at 494-2402



100% gray cotton golf shirts with pocket and embroidered full-color

Alamo PC logo

Available at the Learning Center in a wide variety of sizes.

\$20.00

Call the Learning Center at 736-0700

Alamo PC Organization has your Number!

Your membership number entitles you to a full year of membership privileges. Established in 1983, this non-profit, all-volunteer organization is dedicated to helping members keep up with trends and technologies.

Monthly Meetings

Every month you can attend a presentation meeting, which is open to our 2,500 members. Local and national companies provide the first glimpses of new products and discounts on existing products. There are also drawings for FREE hardware and software.

Award-Winning Magazine

When you join Alamo PC, you'll receive its award-winning magazine, *PC Alamode*, each month. You'll learn of group activities and you'll enjoy the reviews of new products from your fellow members. Regular columnists will give you insight to this fast-paced, dynamic industry. As a member, you can sell your outgrown stuff in our FREE Classified ads section.

Special Interest Groups and Classes

Alamo PC offers more than 30 Study Groups and classes on specific software programs for beginners to expert. These small groups typically meet once a month in one of our two hands-on computer labs or classrooms and provide an opportunity to get answers in an informal setting. There are groups for word processing, Web design, graphics and programming and even study groups to help you get Microsoft Certified. You can attend as many SIGs as you'd like and, as you become experienced, even lead one!



Internet (www.alamopc.org)

Alamo PC is on the Internet, and more importantly, Alamo PC can help you get on the Internet too. If you're already on the Internet, attending one of Alamo PC's Internet SIGs will help you to become a savvy Internet surfer.

Alamo PC SeniorComp

Are you age 45 or older and not into computers or the Internet yet? Let us help. Contact Alamo PC today and sign up for the very next class. Classes are hands-on at a pace to match your learning style.

Expert Help

Deadlocked with a computer problem or question? Get access to personal help from expert Alamo PC members. Just call! If you need someone to diagnose hardware and software problems, try "THE DOCTOR IS IN," a free clinic where members bring in their computers and allow our experts to help diagnose and often fix many PC ailments.

APPLY FOR YOUR NUMBER -- JOIN NOW!

To join, return the application below or sign up online at www.alamopc.org. Your \$45 dues covers your entire family!e. You may use your credit card or send your personal check. If you need more information, call (210) 736-0700. Shortly after joining, you'll receive a membership card entitling you to all rights and privileges and discounts. **JOIN TODAY!**

GIFT MEMBERSHIPS NOW AVAILABLE: Call 210-736-0700 for details.



Membership Application -- Apply for your number today!

PLEASE ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS. This information will be kept in confidence - it will be used for planning purposes only

FIRST: _____ MI _____ LAST: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE H: _____ W: _____ FAX: _____

DATE OF BIRTH: ____/____/____ OCCUPATION: _____

EMPLOYER: _____ TITLE: _____

E-MAIL: _____

Please accept my membership for: ☐ 1 year - \$45 ☐ 2 Years - \$85 ☐ 3 Years - \$125 ☐ New Member ☐ Renewal

Method of payment: ☐ Check ☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard ☐ American Express

Credit Card # _____ EXP DATE: ____/____/____ SIGNATURE: _____

Make checks payable to Alamo PC Organization and mail to: **Alamo PC, PO Box 65180, San Antonio, TX 78265-5180**

IMPORTANT ☐ I do not authorize Alamo PC Organization to release my name address and phone to selected vendors

PCA JAN05

Alamo PC Organization, Inc.

Renew Now!

Isn't it about time for you to consider all the benefits of membership with Alamo PC? Renew your membership before the year is over!

For more information call the Learning Center at
210.736.0700



Consider A Matching Donation, or a Donation To Alamo PC Organization

Increasing members knowledge and effective use of personal computers, and providing other membership services and access to the expertise of other members, does not happen without an associated monthly expense. In recent months, although member dues and ads have offset the majority of the required monthly expense, and cost-saving measures are constantly being reviewed, the total amount of monthly funds generated has been less than the monthly expense. The shortfall has had to come from reserve funds, which have been severely depleted. We would like to offer everyone the opportunity to help rebuild the reserve fund.

If you employer has a "Matching Donation" program, please consider that you can double a donation amount by participating. All donations are tax deductible and can be dropped off at the Alamo PC Learning Center in Crossroads Mall (near the underground parking entrance, accessed from Fredericksburg Road) or mailed to **Alamo PC Organization, PO Box 65180, San Antonio, TX, 78265-5180**. Checks, Money Orders, etc., should be made payable to **Alamo PC Organization** and identified as "Donation."

On-line donations can be made at <<https://training.alamopc.org/donations>>. If you do not have on-line access, credit card donations can be made by mail if you legibly provide the following information on a piece of paper: Full Name, Address, City, State, Zip, Phone Number (to verify you want your card charged), Name of Card, Card Number, Card Expiration Date, Donation Amount, and your usual Signature. Please help us keep our membership dues low, meet our monthly expenses and rebuild the reserve fund.

